

UNDER ORDERS

By Harold S.
Latham



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The Story of Tim and "The Club"



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"O—O—O—Tim," she calls. "Tim—Tim!"

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The Story of Tim and "The Club"

BY

HAROLD S. LATHAM

ILLUSTRATED BY

EDWARD C. CASWELL

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1919

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Set up and electrotyped. Published, September, 1918

TO
MOTHER

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UNDER ORDERS

CHAPTER I

TIMOTHY TITUS SCARBORO, THEATER USHER

“**N**OTHING to do till to-morrow!”

Tim stood just inside one of the big doors of the Empire Theater and looked out across the park to the darkened street that ran through the heart of the city. He sighed from sheer weariness. Saturday was always a hard day for the ushers.

Tim couldn't see why people always waited until Saturday to go to the theater; and if they were bound to wait, why they couldn't be reasonable about seats.

He slammed the steel door shut with a bang that reverberated through the silent auditorium and went back to the dressing room to slip into his street clothes. After all, to-morrow would

be Sunday; in fact, it was now Sunday, strictly speaking, and Sunday meant no work until afternoon. That was one consolation at least!

From all this one might infer that Timothy Titus Scarsboro was a lazy young man, but such was far from the case. He was sixteen, and for more than five years, now, he had stuck by his guns with a steadfastness that did him credit. When his mother had died, many years before, he had been given a home by his half-sister Annie—none too graciously, it is true, but still he was always sure of a bed and a certain amount of food.

“You’ll have to get out and shift for yourself,” Annie had told him promptly at the outset.

First it had been newspapers and odd jobs and then the theater. It had been rather hard, for Tim had longed for an education. For a time, evening school had seemed the solution, and he had attended faithfully, but that had had to be given up when he donned the usher’s uniform. Now, instead of text-books on mathematics and Latin, Tim studied the whims of the theater-

going public and answered the beck and call of the "ladies" behind the scenes with their innumerable wants.

Tim was red-headed, snub-nosed and freckled-faced and with this combination he could not be downhearted long. So, while he might have a touch of discontent when he was tired, rest always brought with it a return of his exuberant spirits. The Sunday following the Saturday when he had taken out his spite on an unpleasant world by slamming the theater door was no exception.

"Hey, Charlie," he called across the theater early that Sunday afternoon, as, with a grand flourish, he finished dusting one row of seats, "to-day's the day we preach."

"Um-hum."

"Wonder what it'll be like," Tim continued. "Suppose they'll sing hymns and have nice, long sermons by men with white whiskers?"

"Don't know," was Charlie's indifferent rejoinder. "I only wish't they was goin' to have the reg'lar show. These here religious doin's

make me tired. What is the thing, anyhow?"

In reply Tim slid through one of the rows of seats and taking a circular from his pocket spread it out before him on the back of a seat and read aloud:

GREAT BOYS' CLUB DRIVE
ALL THE THEATERS AND AMUSEMENT PLACES OF
NEWTON CITY ON
SUNDAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 20TH, 1918
WILL BE TURNED OVER TO
THE COMMITTEE WORKING IN THE
INTERESTS OF THE BOYS' CLUBS OF THIS CITY

You are cordially invited
to come and find out just
what is being done for the
Youth of the Nation.

INTERESTING SPEAKERS GOOD MUSIC

"Gee! I wish't Mamie-Lou and her Flyin' Jackies was bein' held over for to-day instead of this," was Charlie's sole comment.

"My! but you're a piker," interposed Tim.
"This'll be a change."

"Um! Some change!" grunted Charlie.

If Tim had really expected that the "Great Boys' Club Drive" would be led by benign, elderly gentlemen who would make long and dull addresses, he must have been considerably surprised. About four o'clock, after the audience had been ushered in and the preliminaries of the service were over, he rushed out into the back alley-way where the ushers, temporarily relieved from duty, were having an animated argument, and cried: "Say, he's a regular Billy Sunday. You ought to come in and hear him,"—and without waiting to see whether his invitation was accepted or not he hurried back to the rear of the auditorium.

Tim did not follow the fine points of Mr. William Disbrow's argument, but he caught his enthusiasm, nevertheless, and when at the climax of his speech Disbrow contended emphatically that "every boy ought to have a chance and it's up to the citizens of Newton City to see that he gets it," Tim would have liked to throw his cap in the air and shout his approval.

Half an hour later Tim was the center of the

back alley group. "You don't know what you missed," he declared. "It was great!"

"Come on, show us how he sung," Charlie demanded.

Tim's impersonations were always popular. He could mimic the show girl and the tragedian with almost equal skill and it was part of each day's routine for him to entertain his peers with his version of the day's bill.

"You simp!" Tim exploded. "He didn't sing. He said—" and fairly correctly, though with a slight touch of burlesque, Tim took off the speech of William Disbrow, the well-known organizer of boys' clubs and founder of the Pettibone Boy Club of Westvale, one of Newton City's residential suburbs. The applause which followed was joined in by an unseen listener who had stood in the shadow of the door-way looking out upon the boys. A hush followed as Disbrow himself came out, smiling, and clapped Timothy Titus Scarborough on the shoulder.

"Good enough, young man," he said. "You ought to be an actor."

For a minute Tim was taken back. Then the native wit of his mother's land came to his rescue.

"I am!" He looked at Disbrow saucily. "I act all the time. You just ought to see me bow and scrape to the ladies when they growl about their seats. There isn't any better acting done on any stage than I do when I smile and say 'Thank you' when I'd like to say—well, you know what I'd like to say!"

Disbrow laughed and Tim had his second surprise. Could it really be true that this religious person was so human as that? He had expected a reproof.

"You are just the sort of boy to help us put on the big annual show of the Pettibone Boys' Club," Mr. Disbrow began heartily. "We are getting up a 'minstrel,'" he explained, "and we need some new ideas. I think I'll draft you into the service."

Tim hesitated. He did not know quite what to say and waited for the other to make the next move.

"Will you come?" Disbrow asked.

"You said I was drafted. That means I have to, doesn't it?" Tim parried. Then, more seriously—"What is it you want, anyhow?"

"Just this—about forty boys are trying to put on a good, live entertainment to raise money to re-furnish their club room in the Grant Memorial Church. They don't know how to go about it very well. We want some 'pep' put into the thing, and you look as if you had a good supply. Come over and size us up and tell us what's the trouble. Perhaps, if you are really good, we'll give you a part. Now wouldn't that be nice?"

Tim smiled at the pleasantry.

"Will you come?" Disbrow repeated his question.

"When?"

"We rehearse Tuesday and Friday evenings."

"Can't come," Tim announced decidedly.

"Have to work."

"Every evening? Don't you have one evening off?"

"Yes, Thursdays, from eight o'clock on."

“Very well. We’ll call a rehearsal for Thursday, if you’ll be there.”

“This next Thursday?”

“Yes, at eight-thirty.”

Tim considered for a minute. Then—“Well, I’m always game to try anything once. I’ll be there.”

CHAPTER II

THE BOYS' CLUB REHEARSES

TO a mere outsider it might have seemed that pandemonium ruled in the rooms of the Pettibone Boys' Club on that Thursday evening. Boys were rushing about, seemingly going nowhere and doing nothing but adding to the general din and confusion. Greetings were boisterously exchanged the whole length of the room and the "joshing," so dear to every youngster, was loudly and freely indulged in.

To William Disbrow this was as it should be, and here was the secret of his success as a club director.

"What is a club," he once asked a friend who had questioned his methods, "if it isn't a place where a fellow can do as he wishes, always granting, of course, that he is a normal, self-respecting person? I say, let the boys yell if they get

their greatest pleasure that way. If you try to curb them you will only defeat your own purposes."

And so the members of the Pettibone Boys' Club had things pretty much their own way as long as they didn't transgress the few simple rules which Disbrow had laid down as essential.

He stood at the back of the room surveying the scene with an interest that grew out of a deep love. Beside him was his Assistant Director, a young man barely twenty, who had come, through many years of association, to mean much in Disbrow's life. There was perfect understanding between these two, and perfect trust.

Disbrow had sometimes said that if all of his work on behalf of the boys had borne no fruit, he still would not have regretted what he had done, because it had brought him his friendship with Lawrence Reed,—a friendship which would never have matured without the Boys' Club to foster it.

There was something of the idealist about Larry Reed, as one could see in his eyes, in his

smile, in his sensitive, fine lips. That he was also a natural executive, the resolute poise of his head and his square chin indicated beyond a doubt.

Larry was popular with the boys of his own age. He was not above a prank. He had been known to play pranks even on Mr. Disbrow himself,—but for that Disbrow loved him all the more. In him the Director saw the spirit of youth, pure, clear, and free, and he liked to commune with it.

“Well,” Disbrow squinted up his eyes and looked over the room, “I guess it’s about time to start things up.”

Larry nodded and stepped quickly over to a platform on which there were two or three dozen chairs.

“Come on, bunch,” he cried, “to your places!”

The accompanist struck a few notes on the piano as a signal and the boys, some with apparent regret, but nevertheless without much delay, left their games and their reading and assembled on the platform.

That was the interesting part of it all. Mr. Disbrow had discipline only when he wanted it, but, as the sexton of the church said, "By gum, he has it then!"

For the present show, Disbrow was Coach, Chorister, Business Manager and everything but Pianist, and he had even contemplated assuming that rôle as well.

He struck his music stand sharply for order. "Right into that first chorus," he announced and nodded to the man at the piano. They swung into the opening bars of "Are you From Dixie?"

There could be no doubt about it,—the thing dragged dismally. Disbrow made them try it again, but, though they did their best, something was wrong. The boys felt it themselves, Disbrow even more keenly, but he was not enough of a "Producer" to know where the fault lay. He was about to go through the number for the third time—it was a medley of choruses from the popular songs of the hour—when he caught sight of Tim, who had arrived in time to hear the last rendering.

"Here, come and lend a hand, will you? Fellows, this is—" in an aside to Tim, "By the way, what is your name?"—then aloud—"This is Timothy Scarsboro of the Empire Theater, who is going to give us a few pointers."

"Of the Empire Theater, indeed!" Tim thought, responding at once to the gentle raillery in the words. He read the challenge in Disbrow's eyes. Very well, he'd show him that he did know something about "putting on" entertainments.

"The only trouble I see, Mr. Disbrow, is that you don't rag it up enough."

"Rag it up?"

"Yes, like this"—and Tim illustrated his idea of syncopated melody. He did it unaffectedly, without the least embarrassment, until the audience on the platform applauded him; then he was all confusion and his face became nearly as red as his hair.

"That's fine. It's just what we need! Now you take the stick," Mr. Disbrow elaborately presented him with a diminutive pencil, "and put

some of that 'rag' into this chorus. Here, we'll play it through first."

So it was that Tim got into the Pettibone Boys' Club show rehearsals and so it was that he met Lawrence Reed. This meeting took place not that first Thursday, but the next one, for at once Thursday became a regular rehearsal night in order that the club might have the advantage of Tim's services.

Mr. Disbrow sent word that next Thursday that he could not be present and it was up to Larry to run things. He seized upon Tim as soon as he arrived.

"My name's Reed." Larry smiled and held out his hand. "I'm up against it; Disbrow is away; I'm afraid of rough-house; you've got to help me; come—" He jumbled his sentences all together in his haste.

One just naturally took to Larry Reed, and it did not occur to Tim that he could do anything but follow his lead.

The boys voted that rehearsal the "best ever" and even made a jocose recommendation that

Disbrow stay away altogether in the future. Tim let himself loose; he tried out countless imitations; in fact, he gave a complete vaudeville bill all by himself, and between numbers he and Larry coached the show.

It was during a breathing spell, while Tim and Larry were leaning on the piano listening to a new song which Bill Bailey, the accompanist, said was a "sure fine hit," that James Thatcher Peyser introduced himself.

"Any use in trying over my song—as long as Mr. Disbrow isn't here?" he inquired. Peyser parted his hair in the middle; his clothes were immaculate; his tie a wonder to behold; his manner supercilious. Tim noted all these things in a flash. He sized him up as only a boy could and longed to "muss him up."

"Why shouldn't you? We're going through everything. Do the fellows come in on the chorus?"

"Yes."

"We'll take it, then, like the others."

"Oh, very well. I only thought it might be a

waste of time. I've got the thing down all right; don't need help from anybody." He spoke significantly, almost threateningly. "I had my music teacher coach me. Still, if you wish, I suppose I can go over the first verse," he concluded wearily. Tim's eyes followed the trim figure in the well pressed suit as it made its way back to the platform. Then he turned to Larry.

Already the bond of friendship had been established between Larry and Tim. It was the attraction of the opposites. Two people could hardly be more unlike in appearance, in antecedents, in character, than these two—and yet they were unmistakably drawn to each other. It was a friendship that was to grow deeper with each passing day and that was in time to change the whole course of life for one of them.

Tim wondered if Larry had noticed Peyser's overbearing manner—but if he had he gave no sign.

Tim had made only a few suggestions to the boys who were to sing solos—and these had in

every case been accepted in good spirit. He was not a musician and he did not go at the thing from the musician's point of view. All that he tried to do was to show them how to get more out of their lines, how to put more "punch" into them, more "snap" and "go." He realized that Peyser had warned him that he desired none of his advice.

It may have been that he was still a little irritated at Peyser when that young man's turn came—or it may have been wholly a very real dissatisfaction with his rendering of the piece. Anyway, whatever it was, when Peyser finished the first verse and chorus and had begun to repeat the chorus on which all the voices were to come in, Tim gave the signal to stop.

"Your song, Peyser," he said, "is entitled 'When I Get Back Home.' It's supposed to be lively—unless, of course, it's an Old Folks' Home you're singing about. You're making a ballad out of it. It's got to be picked up, like this!" He hummed the opening bars and tapped his pencil on the piano, punctuating the rhythm of

the music. "Now, then, let's try the chorus all together, in that way. It isn't a funeral march, it's a good one-step."

Tim knew better than to ask Peyser to sing the solo part again. The angry flush on the boy's face plainly showed his resentment at the interference.

Once he had spoken, Tim felt a tinge of remorse at having publicly criticized Peyser and when the rehearsal was over he went to him to try to "square things." When Peyser, who was talking to his special chum Bert Simmons, saw Tim approaching, he slipped his arm under Bert's and walked away, not without remarking in tones plainly intended to reach Tim's ears that "for downright ignorant impudence, that guy takes the prize."

"If that's the way you feel," thought Tim, "I should worry!" He turned to Larry who had been watching the incident with troubled eyes. Peyser's wounded pride did not particularly bother Larry, but he feared for Tim; he didn't know how he would take it. He was relieved to

see that Tim was apparently dismissing it from his mind.

Larry was the center of a group, as usual.

"This bunch wants me to ask you why you don't join the club?" he said. "We all think you'd help to keep things lively and that's what we want."

"I'd like to," Tim answered, "but what time have I for a club? I'm a w-u-r-r-king man and I've got a lot to do yet to-night. We're shy a hand at the theater and I told the boss I'd come back after this rehearsal and help him out. So I must be getting along." He reached for his coat and hat on a nearby rack.

"Well, come around all you can, anyway," Larry sang out as Tim, opening the door and seeing a street car a block or two away, made a dash for it.

"I sure will," he called back.

The Pettibone Boys' Club interested Tim. He liked the boys—though he thought of Peyser with momentary regret—and he liked their big, noisy club-room with its banner bedecked walls,

its pool tables, its piano, its Victrola, its games, its reading matter. It was a new experience to him—this social association with those of his own age; it thrilled him as he thought of it on his ride back to the theater. But above all he gloried in his leadership. "There wasn't another fellow there that could have put that bunch through their paces the way I did—no, not even Larry. Gee, but it was a cinch for me!"

CHAPTER III

THE MINSTREL

THE Pettibone Boys' Club was an adjunct of the Grant Memorial Church of Westvale. Its club-room and bowling alleys were located in the basement of the great brownstone structure on the first floor of which several hundred of the good people of the community worshipped on Sundays.

At first many of the congregation had looked with grave misgiving upon the boys' club movement and had questioned the wisdom of installing the equipment which Disbrow had held was essential. Some of the more conservative even contended that a church building was not a suitable place for billiards and bowling. But Disbrow had won out in the end and there was now hardly an attendant at the church who did not

feel a distinct pride in the club and a personal interest in its activities.

The club's membership was drawn from the great middle class which largely made up Westvale's population—boys whose fathers worked in Newton City and who had chosen to live in Westvale because it was near the city and yet removed from its ceaseless grind. At first the club had been open only to those associated in some way with the Grant Memorial Church, but as time went on this restriction was less and less observed, until finally about all that was required was the "O. K." of Mr. Disbrow. For the most part the members were boys in their middle 'teens—though some of the officers and leaders were a little older.

"Disbrow's Boys" was the term affectionately applied by the church folks to the organization. "What will Disbrow's boys do next?" "Have you heard that Disbrow's boys have taken a scholarship for a colored youngster in a mission school?" "Who hid all the hymn books in an out-of-the-way cupboard where they weren't

found in time for Sunday School?"—"Oh, probably Disbrow's boys!"

But despite the trouble they made, the "Grant Memorialers" would not have had it otherwise. They liked to see the young folks around the building; they liked to have them take up the collections on Sundays and do the ushering; they supported them in everything they did—sometimes even in their pranks!

Each year the Pettibone Boys' Club gave an entertainment to raise funds for its necessary expenses; this entertainment the church people attended almost to an individual. The "minstrel" which had been announced for this year was a departure from the plays of previous seasons, and interest was at an even greater pitch than formerly; and when the day of the great event finally came, enough tickets had been sold to fill every one of the six hundred seats in the hall.

The last week of rehearsal had wrought great changes in the cast and chorus, and things moved now with a precision and team-spirit which delighted Disbrow. In effecting this Tim had had

no small part. Living in the atmosphere of the theater and seeing what "got over" the footlights, he had been full of helpful suggestions which Disbrow had, with few exceptions, adopted. The occasion was also to mark Tim's first appearance on the stage, as Disbrow had made him one of the two "ends." Larry, who could be counted upon to keep his head, was interlocutor; Peyser was the other end, having been chosen because he had a naturally good voice, and an end man must be able to sing.

The boys assembled in the hall at seven o'clock and from that time on wild confusion held sway behind the scenes.

"Where's my towel?"

"Who swiped my cold cream?"

"Gee, I'm so *nervous!*"

"Here, listen to me while I say my joke."

"I can't remember how the last verse of my song begins."

"Who's got the burnt cork?"

"Do you put it on thick?"

"Never again! *Never again!*"

Sentences such as these were hurled back and forth. Discarded clothes were thrown about. Costumes to be donned lay in dejected piles on tables and chairs and forty boys wanted Mr. Disbrow's attention at one time.

Larry helped all that he could, smearing the cork over neglected white spots on otherwise black faces, adjusting wigs and tying ties. Tim was not due until eight o'clock. The theater manager had reluctantly agreed to let him have the evening off, though it had required all of Tim's powers of persuasion to bring him to this decision. Mr. Disbrow was distinctly relieved when he saw him come in "right on the dot."

Impossible as it had seemed that cast and chorus would ever be ready, it was really only a quarter of an hour after the advertised opening time that the curtain parted and disclosed forty black-faced "comedians," dressed alike in blue coats and white trousers, sitting in the inevitable semicircle.

The Pettibone Boys' Club's "minstrel" was on.

From the start, Tim took the honors. He did not even share them with Peyser, who faced him at the other end of the line. If Peyser told a joke that yielded mild laughter, Tim added a snapper to it that brought the house down. If Peyser assumed a grotesque attitude, Tim burlesqued it and got the laugh. All this is permissible in minstrelsy; it is the life of that particular form of entertainment. An end man who does not capitalize the "end" opposite him, is not making the most of his opportunity. Tim knew this and had no thought of offending Peyser. His only desire was to keep that great sea of folks out there in the darkened auditorium in good spirits. Not so with Peyser. He felt that Tim was deliberately queering his performance.

The climax came when Peyser rose to sing. He had a good voice and could be counted on to score a hit. He started in confidently:

"When I get back home
No more I'll roam.
My Ma and my Dad,
Won't they be glad. . . ."

At this point a subdued tittering which had run through the audience burst into one loud, glorious shriek of pure delight.

Peyser hesitated for a moment, glanced apprehensively at Tim, but saw only childlike innocence written on his face, and then proceeded:

“And sister Sue,
And Uncle too,
Why all the gals . . .”

Again the laughter. Peyser knew that he ought to ignore it and go on as well as he could. Many a time he had seen an “end” struggle along with his song during a hubbub caused by the antics of some other performer; he understood perfectly that Tim was not exceeding the proprieties; but his patience, worn short by earlier experiences, had snapped. He turned and faced Tim just as that individual was executing a superb bit of silent mimicry.

“If you can’t keep yourself in hand until I get through,” he said deliberately, “I’ll stop right now.”

The two boys glared at each other for a min-

ute. Then Larry came to the rescue. Leaving his chair in the center he approached the two.

"See—he'ah—gentlemans," he began, assuming the negro dialect of his part, "what—wha—wha's—this—? An—an—al—al—altercashun? Now—I'm—neut—ral—yah understand? Neutral—but—all—the same we don't—have—no—alter—cashuns 'roun' here—understand?"

In an undertone he said to Peyser, "Look out! You'll queer the show," and to Tim, "Be careful—he's sore." Then he went back to his seat, flourishing his hands and making a great show of expostulation; and Peyser finished his song without further interruption.

A clash had been narrowly averted. The audience thought it was all a part of the dialogue, but those on the stage knew differently and complimented Larry on his presence of mind.

Tim's song was next to the closing number. If he had anticipated that Peyser would take this occasion to "get even," he must have been greatly surprised, for Peyser had given up "clowning" altogether and sat as indifferent to the proceed-

ings as the least important chorus member on the back row. Tim "put his song over" like a professional, and the applause which followed had hardly died away when they swung into the closing chorus, a rollicking piece which left every one quite convinced that the Pettibone Boys' Club's "minstrel" was the best "show" ever—and Tim a wizard!

The amount of "kidding" which Peyser had to endure during the half hour when the boys were removing the black from their faces and dressing, probably set a new record for that kind of torture so far as the Pettibone Boys' Club was concerned. He found that no one was in sympathy with his point of view and that he was regarded as having nearly wrecked the show.

"A nice mess you would have made of things if Larry hadn't butted in!" Bert Simmons remarked. Bert usually approved of Peyser.

Peyser regarded him gloomily. "I suppose I ought to have let him hog the whole thing. Well, I'm glad I didn't, anyhow."

"You ought to be glad Larry took a hand," Frank Parsons put in.

"Well, I'm not—I would have been glad of a chance to show that guy's impertinence up."

"I'm not sure whom you would have showed up," some one hazarded. All of which did not add to Peyser's peace of mind.

As he was leaving the building he encountered Tim.

"Peyser, I'm sorry," Tim started in, frankly; "I didn't mean to make you sore. I was only trying to get the laughs. That's the way they do it in a professional 'minstrel'—put in a lot of that stuff."

Peyser took several steps without replying. Then:

"Are you going to make returns on the tickets you took to sell?" he asked grimly. "The agreement was that everything was to be in to-night. You're about the only one who hasn't settled up." Peyser consulted a list he held in his hand.

"No, I'm not ready, and you needn't be asking

me all the time. When I see fit I'll attend to it." Tim's tone was not pleasant. The way in which Peyser had ignored his apology infuriated him.

Just at this moment Mr. Disbrow appeared. "What's the matter, boys? Going to fight it out?" he inquired, laughing.

"I was trying to get Scarsboro to settle his ticket account, but he's too blamed independent," Peyser explained.

Mr. Disbrow looked at Tim inquiringly.

The boy flushed. "I—can't find them—I must have lost my package," he faltered.

"How many had you sold?"

"Why—none," Tim answered. "I didn't have any time."

"You'll have to pay for them anyhow," Peyser snapped. "You're responsible for the ten. That's three dollars and a half."

"If you lost them," Mr. Disbrow interrupted, "you needn't pay for them. You have been far too valuable to us for me to permit of such a thing."

"It will be easy enough to find out whether any

of the tickets were used or not." There was the suggestion of a sneer in Peyser's voice. "They were all numbered and we know what numbers were given out to each one."

"Peyser, that'll do!" Disbrow commanded. He turned to Tim. "It's all right, old boy." He held out his hand. "Of course you lost them. We'll forget it—and thank you for all you have done and for your splendid performance."

Tim took the proffered hand, but his glance wavered before Disbrow's friendly smile.

Tim was not as happy as he had expected to be when, a few minutes later, he took the car for home. His pleasure in his triumph of the evening had passed, and in its place there was a vague unrest, a dissatisfaction with himself, which was a new sensation to him and one far from comfortable.

CHAPTER IV

"PAINT BOTH SIDES ALIKE"

LARRY was being introduced to life behind the footlights. Under Tim's guidance the mysterious realm that lay beyond the curtains was being revealed.

A few days after the "minstrel" Tim encountered Larry on the street, and the invitation to visit the Empire stage during the off-hours of the morning was the result. The great dark expanse of space, the painted canvas, which was not so attractive near at hand as at a distance, the dressing rooms, cluttered, dirty, ill-smelling, the pounding of the stage carpenters as they hastily constructed new settings,—all these Larry saw, and his love for things theatrical suffered a severe shock. Gone were the dear illusions.

"Everything is such a fake, you know," he

protested, rubbing his hands over the rough canvas which, as the audience saw it, was a charming bit of woodland scenery.

"Yes," Tim agreed, "but as long as it looks all right from the other side, what's the difference? That's what counts in this world, the side that people see."

"I'm not so sure," Larry objected. "People usually see both sides in time."

Tim looked thoughtful, but made no reply. They passed on into the "star's" dressing room, a cubby-hole slightly larger than the others and favored with a window.

"Do you really think that's true?" Tim asked.

Larry was looking, at the moment, at a large lithograph hanging on the wall, depicting a scene from a popular play of a past season.

"What, this?" Larry pointed to the picture and laughed. "Why, no; I shouldn't be at all surprised to find, if I looked on the other side, that it was a bunch of grapes or a bushel of potatoes." He stopped, for he saw that Tim was in no frame of mind for jesting.

"Seriously, though, just what are you referring to?"

"Why, what you said about fakes always being found out in time."

"Of course I mean it." Larry took up an eyebrow pencil from a shelf that apparently served as dressing table and examined it critically.

"'Honesty is the best policy.'"

"Do you believe that too?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's a new one to me. I thought those words were used in copy books to learn how to write by. I don't mind telling you that it isn't the rule of the folks I know. No, siree—instead, it's get as much as you can, as quick as you can, any way you can, before the other fellow can. I'm not sure but what I believe that's the thing to do if you want to get along."

"Oh, shucks!" Larry chucked an empty spool at him. "You're talking just to get me to preach, and you can't do it. You wouldn't take the pennies out of a blind man's cup any more than I would."

"Well, I don't know as I could stand for a blind man, but if he had eyes and I could do it when he wasn't looking or wasn't on to his job . . . well, I'm not so sure."

"Timothy Titus Scarsboro! Dry up! What do you mean, anyhow, talking such rot?" Larry exploded. "Good Lord, Tim, surely you think there is something more important in this world than pennies! Character, for example."

"Now, you're touching on a sore spot! I haven't had any time to get a character; I've been too busy getting a living."

Larry looked at his friend searchingly. "Well, it's about time you got busy, then," he said. "But I don't believe you, anyhow. Now, for example, would you lie about—well, say about me, or Mr. Disbrow, just to help yourself along?"

"No!" emphatically.

"Well, there you are; that's character. Would you get off the line of rough talk we heard from the 'gentleman' in the alley as we came in?"

"No."

"That's character. Would you take money from me when I wasn't around?"

"Maybe not from *you*, but I might from—well, say from Peyser."

Larry gave Tim an affectionate shove. "You're a bad lot, Timothy."

"The point is," Tim continued, determined to have the last word, "I have so darned much trouble in *getting* what I do, and living on that, that any little extra thing comes in handy."

"You are frank, anyhow," Larry remarked, "and I shall see to it that no loose change is left lying around,—though, so far as you're concerned, it would be just as safe as it would be in a deposit box in the First National. But, say, it's getting late; your 'actorines' will soon be coming in here. Have I seen all of this 'behind the scenes' business?"

They passed out of the room on to the stage, and in the semi-darkness they almost stumbled over a man in overalls who was working on a trap door on the stage floor.

"Sorry, Mr. Flanagan," Tim apologized.

"All right—all right; but can't you see?" Flanagan blustered, pleasantly. "Who's your friend?"

"This is Lawrence Reed. I was just showing him around the place. Mr. Flanagan," turning to Larry, "is our 'Props.'"

"Is he real," asked Larry, "or only make believe?"

"He's real, all right, I guess you'd think if you could hear him on some occasions when the actors don't like some property he supplied."

"A—ah! So you're Reed, are you? We've been hearing about you over here." Flanagan rose from his knees. "Isn't this the young gentleman who was connected with the 'minstrel' you talked so much about?"

"Yes," Tim answered shortly. "Come, Larry, you said you had to hurry."

But Flanagan went right on in spite of the interruption, as a man does who likes to hear himself talk.

"Sure, it's some publicity agent for that 'minstrel' you had in Tim Scarsboro. You ought to

have heard him auction off his pack of tickets. Made folks take 'em that he knew couldn't use 'em. It didn't make any difference to him whether a fellow could go or not—he had to cash up! Of course none of us here could get way over to Westvale,—we had our own show to look out for right on this spot. Got us all together one afternoon and sold the whole bunch of tickets to us at anywhere from one to three bits apiece. It would have done your heart good to have heard him at it.”

Even in the dusk Larry could see that Tim's face had gone white. He felt a great pity for him.

“Very interesting, Mr. Flanagan,” he said, and his words sounded forced, “but I must be going. Glad to have met you.” With Tim he passed along to the doorway.

“It's true,” Tim admitted as they stood there together for a moment and their eyes met. “Didn't you say just a few minutes ago,” with a pitiable attempt at gayety, “that you always see

the other side in time? Well, you've seen it in my case now."

"I have seen it for the last time! From now on, Timothy," Larry seized him firmly by the shoulders, "you are going to paint both sides alike."

"It'll take some paint," Tim said, maintaining his bravado.

Larry put his hand into his pocket and drew out several bills, which he placed in Tim's hand.

"Here, take these. Maybe you haven't got the ready cash, now. Go to Mr. Disbrow and pay for the tickets. You can tell him—well, you can tell him anything you like; I'm leaving that to you." He held out his hand. "Between us this is a closed incident, and it isn't going to make a particle of difference in our friendship. We're going to stick together—understand?" Without another word he hurried away.

Tim did not know that Larry could not have said more if he had so desired because of the choke in his throat.

CHAPTER V

"LET'S DO SOMETHING"

"THE number three ball in the side pocket. Some shot, eh?" Tim took careful aim.

"Some shot, if you'd made it," Bert Simmons agreed.

The ball rolled past the indicated pocket and dropped deliberately into the end pocket.

"Didn't I say *end*? That's what I meant, anyhow." Tim started to take another shot.

"No, you didn't say *end*; you said *side*. Your turn, John." Larry spoke casually, chalking the end of his cue at the same time. But Tim knew the firmness that lay behind the mild reproof.

"Never mind," Martin Kelly piped up. "You'll be a regular player one of these days." Martin always wanted every one to be happy. "This is only the second or third time you've tried, isn't it?"

"Yes," from Tim. "I never had much time for billiards before."

"How do you like your new job?" Parsons punctuated his question with a sharp bang of his cue on the floor to show his disapproval of a particularly wild shot he had just made.

"Oh, it's fine stuff—and so's that!" Tim shot the ball straight into the pocket this time.

"What, don't you usher any more at the Empire?" Martin asked in surprise. But Tim was too busy to answer. He shook his head and went after another ball.

"No," Bert Simmons explained, "Disbrow's given him a 'posish' in his office."

An expressive "Oh" came from two or three. "Gee, a sure lucky guy," some one added.

Pocket billiards was a fine art as played by the boys of the Pettibone Club. One not only had to play—one had to keep up a line of talk and banter. The player who simply played was voted a "clam," and no matter how skillful he might be, he was never welcomed into the game so heartily as the one who could play a little and talk a little.

Only Larry was silent to-night. He played mechanically when his turn came; he gave back no jest for jest; there was a thoughtful look in his eyes.

Tim noticed this, but he had no idea that he was partly the cause. It had not occurred to him that he ought to tell Larry of his interview with Mr. Disbrow. Tim always dismissed disagreeable things from his mind as soon as possible.

Larry, on the other hand, knew only that Tim had had a conference with Mr. Disbrow and that out of this had come a job for Tim with Mr. Disbrow's concern. He was troubled; he wondered if he ought to tell Mr. Disbrow the whole story. He felt that possibly he owed it to Mr. Disbrow to do so. He wished above all that Tim would make such a revelation unnecessary by taking him into his confidence; he was, perhaps, a little hurt that Tim had not cared to do so.

Peyser joined the group around the table, nodding curtly to some of the fellows and ignoring others.

"Well, I see Disbrow made you pay up for the

tickets you lost, anyhow," he remarked, looking at Tim. "He just gave me your money. What's the idea? Did you find you didn't lose them—or what?"

"If you want to know, you can ask Mr. Disbrow," Tim replied evenly.

"Thanks! Maybe I will."

Further discussion was cut short by the call to "clear the table and come to order."

"This is our business night, you know," Larry explained to Tim. "We always stop the games at eight o'clock."

"Does Mr. Disbrow come?" Tim inquired.

"Not unless there is something special doing; I don't expect him to-night."

"Where'll I go during the meeting?" Tim asked. "I'm not a member yet, you know."

"Stay right here. We're not fussy that way. Mr. Disbrow's sent your name in to the secretary and that's what counts. The new members often come to the meeting just before they're voted in."

The club president, Harold Stevens, was a big, round-faced boy with pompous manners. He

took pride in the way he conducted himself in the chair.

"The meeting will please come to order," he called in stentorian tones.

It came to order—as much as it ever did, which is to say that the boys all sat down and some of them stopped talking. It was delightfully unconventional and unparliamentary. The chairs were in no set order; some were ranged against the wall while others were in the middle of the room. Neither was there any formality in the attention of those occupying the chairs. Some of the boys stretched themselves out on two, muttering something about "solid comfort"; others tipped back against the wall at perilous angles; still others straddled the chairs, jockey fashion.

They were ready to get down to work; no staid decorum here, no red tape to hamper proceedings. The number of measures which they could discuss and put through in one night was simply stupendous!

The preliminaries were soon dispensed with—roll call, reports, and the like—and then Tim, who

had been following the proceedings with huge interest, found himself the subject of a graceful little speech made by Parsons, the secretary, who acknowledged the club's indebtedness to Tim in the "minstrel" and wound up by proposing him for membership.

The election which followed was unanimous. Either Peyser did not vote or he followed the crowd.

"Speech! Speech!" Martin Kelly sang out, and several others took up the cry.

The president rapped for silence.

"Thanks, fellows," Tim managed to say. "I'm glad that I've got a job now that gives me time to take in a club like this. But please cut it out about the show. I didn't do anything. I'd rather you'd forget it."

A semblance of order was restored and the club turned its attention to other matters. First of these was the Year Book.

The Pettibone Boys' Club Year Book was a little magazine issued in the fall of each year and devoted to the work of the club for the previous

twelve months. In addition to accounts of basket-ball games, bowling and billiard tournaments and the like, it contained original stories and poems by club members; Parsons was managing editor, while Peyser his associate, was dignified with the title of "Literary Editor."

"Our last Year Book is only a few months old and it may seem as though we were starting things for the next one pretty early—but we want to have lots of time, for it's got to be the best Year Book ever issued," Parsons said emphatically, after he had outlined briefly some of his plans. "We don't publish until September; that gives us nearly six months to get the copy in and a month or so to get it edited and printed. If every one does his part we can set a new standard."

"I want to urge you," Parsons continued, "to send in your contributions early. Don't wait until August. Send them in now. There'll be enough stuff that will have to be late and it makes it too hard for your editors to have everything dumped on them the last moment.

"In this connection I have an announcement to make. Mr. Disbrow has offered a prize of ten dollars for the best original story submitted by a club member and five dollars for the best poem. The judges are to be the Year Book editors, Peyser and myself, acting with Mr. Disbrow. The conditions are printed on slips which will be distributed later. They provide for the anonymous submission of the manuscript, state the length, etc., and of course stipulate that the stories and poems are to be wholly original. I am sure we owe Mr. Disbrow a vote of thanks for his generosity, and I hope that many will compete." Parsons sat down and a few members indicated their satisfaction in his announcement by applauding. All joined heartily in the vote to thank Mr. Disbrow for his offer.

"Is there any further business?" the President inquired.

Larry rose. "Mr. President," he began, "I don't know as this is business. I don't quite know what it is. I guess I just want to talk to ease my mind. . . . Something's troubling me

and I find it's always good to talk it out—to get it off my chest.” He glanced around the circle and then went on:

“It's about the war—*our* war, and our part in it. Ten months ago the United States declared war on Germany, but how many of us have given that action even a second thought! We think of it as something that concerns our brothers, our fathers, maybe, but not ourselves. I would like to have the club consider this,—consider whether there is not some work we can do. Even though we are a few years younger than those who must fight . . . and perhaps die.

“If we lived in France we'd be doing our part now, in the shop, in the factory, in the field. We would have come face to face with real life; here we go on with our own little affairs and our good times; the war doesn't exist for *us*. It hasn't laid *our* homes in ruins!” Larry paused, his head thrown back, his lips parted and a fine fire in his eyes. The room was quiet. One heard the breathing of his neighbor. “I say that isn't fair! That isn't the American way. Let's



"Let's give up something—let's do something!"

join hands with the boys of France, of England, of Italy. Let's give up something—let's do something; not because we have to—we don't have to, we haven't been conscripted—but because we *want* to.

"I haven't any plans, but there must be work and plenty of it for half a hundred able-bodied fellows like us. Let's find it and do it. Then we'll enjoy our playtime all the more, knowing that we've tried to help."

Larry sat down. For a moment there was a constrained silence. One or two boys moved uneasily in their chairs. Martin Kelly broke the spell.

"I second the motion," he cried out lustily, whereat every one laughed.

"I presume we are all in agreement with Larry's remarks—" The president looked around the room inquiringly.

"Aye, aye," came the answer in decided tones.

"Let's get on to the job."

"But what can we *do*?"

"Mr. President!"

"Yes, Mr. Parsons."

"Why couldn't we sell Thrift Stamps for one thing? Half the people of this town don't know there are such things and the other half don't understand the way they work. If we explained that the government issues these stamps at twenty-five cents apiece, that when you get sixteen you add a few pennies and exchange them for a War Savings Stamp, and that in five years the government pays you five dollars for that stamp, I'm sure we could dispose of a lot and be doing a real patriotic service." He looked at Larry for approval.

"That's the idea exactly," Larry agreed heartily.

"I mean, go into the thing in real business fashion. Canvass the town—heaps of publicity, heaps of stamps. Put them over with a big noise." Parsons became quite excited at the thought. "We'll make them sit up and take notice!"

Larry was on his feet in an instant, eager to get in a word; so were several other boys. The enthusiasm was spreading.

"Dr. Leonard is chairman of the War Savings Stamp Committee of Westvale. I know him. I'll see him to-morrow. I'm sure things can be arranged. Fellows, I thank you." Again the serious note in Larry's voice that commanded quiet attention. "It's a little thing, but it's a beginning in the right direction. May I suggest that a special meeting of the club be called for a week from to-night to make final arrangements; and if it's agreeable, I'll interview Dr. Leonard in the meantime."

"We'll show 'em what boys can do," Kelly boasted.

The meeting came to a noisy conclusion.

"Everybody be on hand, sure, next Monday night . . ." was the president's parting injunction.

The stamp plan was the chief topic of discussion in the little groups that formed in the few

minutes that remained before the club's closing time. Even the Year Book was forgotten, apparently, by all save one.

"May I have a slip?" Tim asked, approaching Parsons.

"Slip?"—doubtfully.

"Yes, telling about the ten-dollar prize for a story."

"Oh—I'd forgotten." Parsons produced a supply and began distributing them. Tim took one, folded it carefully, dropped it into his pocket and started for home.

CHAPTER VI

TIM PROTESTS

WHEN the Pettibone Boys' Club made up its mind to do a thing,—it did it! The Thrift Stamp campaign was not to be an exception. Larry had no trouble in persuading Dr. Leonard that the club should be permitted to act as an agency for the distribution of the stamps; in fact, the Doctor eagerly welcomed this addition to his force.

At the special meeting of the club it was voted to apportion \$50.00 from the club's treasury for the purchase of an initial supply of two hundred stamps, the money secured from the sale of these to be devoted to the purchase of more.

For the next few weeks the good people of the Grant Memorial Church, as well as their neighbors and friends, were besieged and interviewed

until there was not one who did not know all there was to know about the virtues of Thrift Stamps. Almost every one approached was won over in time by the earnest endeavors of the club members. One good old lady laughingly declared that she had bought enough stamps to paper her bedroom, adding that it was a good-sized room, too!

By the time the next monthly business meeting of the Boys' Club was held, five hundred dollars' worth of stamps had been sold, and the good work was still going on. In all of this Larry had taken an active part; Tim had been only an interested spectator.

It was half an hour before the appointed time for the meeting. Larry and Mr. Disbrow were enjoying one of those intimate conversations which made the association of these two mean so much to each other. The scene was Mr. Disbrow's office on the ground floor of the church.

Larry was stretched out at ease in a Morris chair; Mr. Disbrow sat near by, quietly contemplating him and realizing again, as he realized

each time they were together, how much the lad meant to him.

"You say that Tim hasn't helped in this wonderful stamp work?" Mr. Disbrow asked.

"No; I can't make him out; he's such a jolly sort that I like him a whole lot, but . . . sometimes I wonder if he isn't a bit selfish."

"Don't be harsh with him," Mr. Disbrow cautioned. "He hasn't had quite the good fortune that has come—well, to you, for example. Ever since he was a youngster, he's had to think of himself first, and it's been a pretty hard job sometimes for him to get food and clothes."

"Oh, yes, I know," Larry agreed; "and, as I say, I think heaps of him, but I do wish he had some of the community spirit."

"Give him time. I'm watching him at the office and, do you know, he's doing pretty well. He's the sort that will get ahead," Mr. Disbrow predicted.

Again came the old worry to Larry. How much did Mr. Disbrow know about Tim? Had the boy been full and frank in his confession?

Had he told him everything? Larry hesitated, but in the end he decided as he had decided before, that he could not tell Mr. Disbrow what Tim had done with the "minstrel" tickets. He would simply have to assume that Tim had been honest with him in that matter. He would feel very much like a tell-tale if he took it upon himself to report the incident as he knew it. Tim had already refunded the money Larry had loaned him and Larry had liked the way he had done it. He had pressed the bills into Larry's hands with a simple "Thank you, old man." Surely he had no reason to suspect that he had dealt unfairly with Mr. Disbrow.

The boys' meeting was in a hubbub when Larry and Mr. Disbrow descended to it.

"It's absolutely the most preposterous thing I ever heard of! Why, I can't . . ." Peyser stopped as the Director and his Assistant entered the room. Then he continued more mildly:

"It doesn't seem to me that it ought to be done under any circumstances."

Martin Kelly was on his feet in an instant. Martin very rarely spoke on a question.

"I don't agree with Peyser," he contended emphatically. "I think it's a mighty good move. I suggest that we refer it to Mr. Disbrow."

"What is it, boys?" Mr. Disbrow inquired genially. "Are you planning to send an army of your own to France—or what?"

The President rose. "Let me explain. At the last meeting of this club Larry made a great speech about our doing our share in war work. The result was the Thrift Stamp campaign. We want to go on with this, for we've got fine results, but we also want to do something more, and to-night Bob Smith has brought forward the idea that we become collectors of bad debts."

"What?" Mr. Disbrow gasped.

The club laughed at his surprise. Bob sprang to his feet.

"Mr. President, allow me to explain it again," and he faced Mr. Disbrow.

"My father, you know," he began, "is a baker.

Conservation is a word that has hit the bakers pretty hard. They are told to 'conserve' here and to 'conserve' there. They have to pay twice what they used to for most of their stuff,—flour, sugar and milk,—and yet if they raise their prices, up goes a howl.

"Now, it would be all right if it weren't for the bad debts, for the people who just naturally put off paying. Father was raging and tearing around about them in the shop the other night. In all of this conservation, he said, it seemed to him a great pity that a lot of people should have to suffer because of the few who don't know what a receipted bill looks like. If it weren't for them, things would be better.

"I thought I had an idea and father has agreed to it. If the Boys' Club wants to visit these backsliders, and keep visiting them until they pay up, father says he'll give us twenty-five per cent. of all we collect. He says, too, that we'll earn it. But I guess the thing doesn't appeal and I would like to withdraw it."

Mr. Disbrow looked thoughtful. "I'm not so sure," he said, after a moment's reflection, "that there isn't something in it."

"Nor I," Martin flung out.

"Of course," Mr. Disbrow went on, "I should like to see the lists before they were given to the members, and I should want to have a serious talk with the boys undertaking the canvass. Really, you know, the more I think of it, the more it appeals to me. That *is* conservation. People should not buy what they can't pay for."

Martin Kelly once more got the floor. "I move that we accept with thanks Mr. Smith's proposal and that we spend all the money we earn this way in buying more Thrift Stamps."

The addition of the clause about the stamps carried the motion, for the boys were "stamp" enthused at that time, and anything that permitted an extension of the stamp campaign was destined to meet with favor.

"For once I agree with Peyser," Tim remarked, after the meeting had adjourned. "Believe me,

I don't see any use in making people sore by hounding them with their old bills. Besides, what do *we* get out of it?"

"What do you mean?" Parsons interrupted. "As a club, we get a lot, if we collect."

"That's not the idea. You can't expect fellows like us, especially those of us who work, to give our time for nothing; it isn't fair."

"Oh!" Parsons put lots of expression into the word. "You mean, what do *you* get out of it?"

"Did you ever play basket-ball, Tim?" Larry put in.

"No."

"Well, you know the game?"

"A little."

"You know what team work is?"

"I can guess."

"There was once a fellow in this club who would have been the best basket-ball player of the day, if he could have played the game all by himself. But, with the team, he was *ab-so-lute-ly* punk! He was all the time thinking about some way in which *he* could make a star shot. He

never had the good of the team in mind. The result was that he was kicked off the team the second year. Get me?"

"I get you," Tim answered, "but all the same this idea of rounding up the poor payers doesn't appeal to me. Do you mean to say that these fellows will get out and hustle around after these debts just because it's good for the club?"

"For the club and others," Larry replied.

Tim shook his head doubtfully.

Mr. Disbrow, who had been listening to the conversation, then took a hand.

"If you were a soldier in the trenches, I think you would have to be a general. It would never do for you to be in the ranks." Mr. Disbrow laughed and thumped Tim on the back; then he continued:

"I can just hear you arguing with your superior officer. 'But I don't think we ought to do this. I don't think we ought to go over the top to-night. What difference will it make to me? I'll just be in another trench.' You'd be forgetting that the great drive, while it hadn't changed

your individual position, might have changed the whole battle front. See? You have been accustomed to looking at things through small-size opera glasses! What you need is to get a pair of field glasses that will make you see much further! Group spirit, all pulling together for a common goal,—that's what we have to be thinking about these days."

Tim nodded soberly as the little group broke up and scattered. Mr. Disbrow had intended to give the boy something to think about, and he had succeeded far better than he knew.

CHAPTER VII

"ON THE JOB"

THERE was a knock on Mr. Disbrow's study door. Mr. Disbrow put down the paper he was reading.

"Come in."

Tim answered the invitation.

"Why, howd'y, Tim. This is an unexpected pleasure. I thought you said you were going to spend your half-holiday at the matinée. Sit down."

"I did think of it, Mr. Disbrow, but I changed my mind. I—I've come for one of those lists."

"Lists?"

"Yes, of folks who don't pay for their bread and cake."

"Oh!" There was real surprise in Mr. Disbrow's voice. "But I thought you didn't believe in that sort of thing."

"I don't know whether I do or not—but, gosh, I've got to do something! I'm not getting any peace these days."

"Peace? Do you mean the boys are nagging you to get busy?"

"Oh, no; they don't say anything. It's something inside me, I guess. Nothing suits me and I thought perhaps I'd feel better if—well, you know you told me I wouldn't be a good soldier—" the boy stammered.

"Did I say just that?" Mr. Disbrow interrupted. "If you could fight the thing to a finish, all by yourself, I know you'd be a good soldier. What I meant to say was, that you didn't see the importance of working in the ranks; that you didn't appreciate the force that lies behind a lot of people working together for one common goal."

"Is that what you mean by 'group spirit'?"

"Yes."

"Larry says I haven't any. Probably I haven't, but if he's got it, I want it too. I like Larry."

Mr. Disbrow held out his hand.

"That's where I'm with you. Keep on, my boy; you couldn't like a finer chap. And I'll tell you a secret—he likes you."

"I want him to. That's why I'm asking for a list of the bad debtors."

Mr. Disbrow picked up several loose papers from his desk and scanned them over. Then he chose several names from each and jotted them down on a memorandum pad, which he handed to Tim.

"There you are," he said. "See what you can do—and good luck! Oh, and here's a card signed by the baker authorizing you to collect for him. You can show the card to any one who questions your right to try to collect these debts."

After the shock of the first plunge, Tim reveled in his new experience. Here was plenty of opportunity for the use of his wits, and he was well trained in that fine art. To be sure, some of those whom he visited were highly indignant and slammed the door in his face before he had half finished his story; but when he could gain a fair

hearing he usually went away with the payment for the debt in his pocket. The part that the Pettibone Boys' Club had in the collection was never mentioned. That was Mr. Disbrow's instruction to all the boys; they acted not as club members but as collectors, assisting "Smith, the Baker."

By the time Tim had covered half the names on his list he had a very respectable amount of money in his pocket, and he had also evolved a philosophy of his own which was something to the effect that while one might work in the ranks one still could be a general.

"Here I am," he mused, "a member of the Pettibone Boys' Club, working with a lot of other fellows to raise money; here I am again, a general, perhaps, storming a fortress all by myself. Gee, it's fun!"

He was just coming down the steps of a comfortable house on an attractive side street where he had made a successful visit when,—

"Hey, you, Timothy!" came a call from across the way. He looked over and there was Larry

standing on the porch of a modest, brown-shingled house.

"Come on over," Larry invited. "What are you doing, anyhow?"

"Collecting," Tim answered, crossing the street quickly to his friend.

"Collecting? Do you mean that you are on the job? Good enough."

"Yep! Like it, too."

"'Course you like it, old sport. Say, I want you to come in to supper, and spend the night. Just had that bright idea as I saw you over there."

"Why—" Tim hesitated.

"Sure, you can. You can stay to supper anyway, then if you think your folks would be worried about you—"

"Worried! My folks? About me? You don't know my folks. Besides, Annie's away."

"That settles it, then."

Larry took Tim's arm and ushered him into his home.

That evening was to remain a bright spot in Tim's memory. Of home life he knew very little,

certainly of such home life as the Reeds'. He could not help contrasting the scene with the noisy disorder of the rooms over which Annie presided. It was not the difference in furnishings and arrangements that he noted so much as the difference in manner. The Reeds apparently liked their home and liked to be in it with one another. At Annie's, home was a place to sleep in and to eat in, but not to enjoy in any other way. Family life was unknown in Annie's cluttered flat and it was unknown to Tim; this little glimpse of it fascinated him. And he lost his heart to Mrs. Reed. Somehow he had the feeling that his own mother must have been like her and that, had she lived, he would have had a home like this. Her simple and cordial greeting made him her loyal friend from the very first.

"I enjoy having Larry's friends visit him, and I have heard a great deal about you, Timothy. I hope I shall see you often." She laid her hand caressingly on his shoulder for a moment.

"And this is my sister," Larry said. "Ruth,

this is Tim. You saw him at the show, remember?"

Tim's association with girls had been limited. He didn't know what to say—so he just smiled, whereat Ruth smiled too, and the ice was broken.

"I thought you were awfully funny in the 'minstrel,'" she began. "How did you make that smoke come out of your head that time you pretended you were a steam engine?"

Ruth was twelve or thirteen years old, a mere slip of a girl, and the biggest thing about her, her mother often said, was her supply of question marks, which was inexhaustible.

"Well, you see, it was this way—there was a tube running from the under side of my wig down under my coat and into my pocket, where it was joined on to a rubber ball. This was filled with a fine powder and every time I squeezed the ball this powder shot out of the other end of the tube and it looked like smoke coming out of my head, . . . and . . ."

"Oh, I see," Ruth exclaimed. "That's awfully interesting."

"I know a lot of show things like that," Tim boasted; he was on familiar ground now.

"Tell me some of them," Ruth commanded. The two dropped down on to a settee and Tim entered into an elaborate explanation of the "whys and wherefores" of various curious stage mechanisms which he had encountered behind the scenes on the Empire stage.

After supper, when the boys were alone in Larry's room, the conversation turned to club affairs.

"By the way, how'd you come out with your collecting?" Larry asked.

In answer, Tim went over to the bed and emptied out of his pockets on to the white spread, a miscellaneous collection of coins and bills. "About thirty dollars in all. Not bad for three or four hours, is it?"

"I should say not," Larry agreed. "How did you do it?"

"Oh, I just kidded them along until they forgot what they were doing and opened up the purse-strings." He was silent for a moment, then:

"Say, Larry, do you think I'm getting the group spirit?"

Larry flushed, remembering his criticism and realizing now how it had hurt Tim. "Drop it, old man, drop it," he cried. "You've got the spirit, all right."

For hours they talked, of hopes and plans, of things done and yet to be done, sharing their most sacred confidences as boys will do, arguing, bantering, and with it all growing closer together in a bond that was not to be broken.

It was only when Mrs. Reed, opening the door a crack, exclaimed, "Larry—Tim—do you know that it's long past midnight?" that the talk was brought to a close, and two tired boys, happy in each other's friendship, finally "turned in."

"Smith, The Baker," was much surprised with the result of the boys' collections,—for Tim's success was equaled by many of the others who undertook the work, and a substantial sum was added to the stamp fund. But even more important was the fact that out of this effort at conser-

vation there grew another movement of still larger proportions.

One Sunday morning, a few weeks after the collecting campaign had been inaugurated, there appeared in the Church Bulletin a notice to the effect that the Pettibone Boys' Club, in order to do its bit at conservation and to assist in the distribution of Thrift Stamps, would assume the delivery of purchases made at local groceries and meat markets, with the understanding that for every five deliveries made, the customer was to buy one Thrift Stamp of the club.

The significance of this offer lay in the fact that the store-keepers had recently announced that, in order to help meet the high costs of living, they were reducing the prices of all merchandise to the lowest possible figures; and that because of this reduction they would have to make a charge of five cents for each delivery. Those who desired to save to the utmost would have to carry their parcels home with them.

The Pettibone Boys' Club's proposition was made on the assumption that many persons

would, for various reasons, still have their purchases delivered and pay the toll. By the terms which the boys offered, the customer would be paying no more for his deliveries than they would cost if made through the store, and he would, in the end, also have the Thrift Stamp. All who were willing to enter into an agreement were to give their names to representatives of the club, with the names of the merchants with whom they dealt. Provision would then be made for the delivery service.

After the first gasp of surprise, the "Grant Memorialers" nodded their heads in approval. "Disbrow's Boys—what next!" they exclaimed. But their hearts swelled a little with pride as they signed up for the Pettibone Boys' Club's Conservation Delivery. The store-keepers were delighted with the idea. Deliveries were a service to the customer which they were obliged to render and, though they cost them more than five cents for each delivery, that was all that they felt they could charge. To get rid of these deliveries, then, was a source of real satisfaction.

Accordingly, their coöperation with the club was complete and hearty.

“It isn’t fighting and it isn’t re-building ruined cities and homes,” Larry thought to himself, as his mind ran over the stamp campaign, the baker’s debts, and now this new delivery work. “But it is helping a little. It’s doing what we can do—the thing that lies nearest us. It’s reaching out just a little way across the waters.”

CHAPTER VIII

“AM I A PROBLEM?”

“**H**OW'D you come out with that wonderful story you was goin' to pull down the prize with? Got the money and spent it, I suppose.” Annie, who, it seemed to Tim, was more disheveled than ever on this particular morning, glanced across the table at her half-brother.

Tim did not lift his eyes. “Forget it,” he said, and went on with his breakfast of oatmeal and bread.

“Well, I don't know as you need be so crusty about it,” Annie objected. “I certainly saw you fussin' enough with your books and your papers and pencils to make me wonder what come of it.”

“Nothing yet,” Tim replied sullenly. “The prize hasn't been announced.”

“But you sent your story in, didn't you?”

"Yes . . . I sent it in, all right, . . . long ago."

"You sure ought to get the prize if workin' for that club has anythin' to do with it; deliverin' packages and sellin' stamps—goodness knows what you ain't doin'. I should think you'd want a little time for the movies."

"I get it, too," Tim answered; "you don't need to worry about me." He shoved his chair back from the table and rose, his eyes lingering for a moment on the soiled cloth and the unattractive appearance of things generally—so different from the clean orderliness of the Reeds' dining room. That one evening he had spent with Larry, now several weeks past, had made a lasting impression on his mind, and he had longed unspeakably for the quiet restfulness of that home.

He had worked furiously in the club's stamp campaign, throwing off altogether his former reserve and entering into the spirit of the movement with the tremendous energy which he gave to every self-assigned task. This he did, not so

much because he had experienced a change of heart, but because he wanted an excuse to be with Larry. He was trying to make himself believe that he was a part of the life of which he had caught several inviting glimpses.

The activities of the Pettibone Boys' Club had set agog the little community in which it was situated. Skeptics had almost vanished from their midst. Those who had maintained that the selling of stamps by the boys was an impracticable ideal, that the collecting of the baker's bad debts was an absurdity, and the delivering of merchandise from the local stores a beautiful dream, no longer held to their contentions, but admitted their shortsightedness. The Boys' Club was the most talked-of organization, not only of the church but of all Westvale. It had even received a letter from the Town Council complimenting the club upon its work and thanking the boys for what they had done for their community.

It was not surprising, in view of these circumstances, that the club began to hold an exalted opinion of its importance.

Mr. Disbrow watched the trend of affairs with growing uneasiness. The club-room was a bit noisier than usual. The members did not seem to lend themselves so readily to suggestion as formerly, and there was a touch of insubordination in the air. "Just a bit unruly," he thought to himself; "they must be watched."

It was the electric switchboard that really brought things to a climax. This was located in the furnace room near one of the outside doors which the boys frequently used in leaving the church. On this board were the switches which controlled both the lighting system of the church and the power for the organ. Everything was open and easy of access.

"Pulling off the switch" became, about this time, the favorite evening sport of the Boys' Club. There was something apparently irresistible in the temptation to plunge the entire church into absolute darkness. Occasionally it made no difference, for the church proper was closed and the sexton had only to cross the basement in the dark and make the connection. At other times it in-

terfered with activities in the rooms above. Mr. Disbrow had plead with the boys to let the switchboard alone—but in vain. The lure of its magic was stronger than mere words!

The problem was complicated for Mr. Disbrow by the fact that he never could tell who was manipulating the switches. Half a dozen boys would go home at once—by way of the furnace room, of course—and one of them on the way out would pull down the little black handle—but which one? Ah, there was the rub! Boys never told on each other; Mr. Disbrow wouldn't have wanted them to; he simply couldn't remember who was in the group that departed just before darkness fell upon them—and even if he could, it would have been impossible to identify the culprit by any process of elimination.

Mr. Disbrow gave it up—and wrote to the official board of the church suggesting that the switchboard be caged in and the cage locked.

But before the official board had taken any action, came the night of the great musical service arranged by the Ladies' Society. There was a

distinguished organist, a soprano of note and a famous violinist. The program opened with solos by the different artists and closed with a trio employing their combined talents. Everything had progressed with a smoothness that had charmed the committee in charge of the Musicale—and with the final number under way they sat back in their seats, relieved that their weeks of work in arranging for the concert had borne such good fruit. And then, right at the climax of the piece, when the soprano was warbling bird-like notes, clear and wonderfully sweet, when the violinist and organist were doing their most expert playing of the evening, the lights went out, and that which should have ended in a burst of melody came to a sudden and inglorious finish.

It was dark for only a moment—for fortunately the sexton had not been far away—and the musicians supposing, naturally, that there was a good and sufficient reason for the sudden blackness and possibly regarding it as some shortcoming of the Westvale Light and Power Company, graciously repeated the piece.

But Mr. Disbrow knew where the explanation lay and immediately instituted an investigation. As usual, it seemed impossible to fix upon the culprit and he had to content himself with a severe general warning, though his past experiences had made him skeptical of the value of such warnings.

"It must not happen again," he declared with more emphasis than was his custom, at a special meeting called two or three days after the incident had occurred. "It *can't* happen again. We have been tolerating this foolishness altogether too long. The next time it occurs, the guilty person will be dealt with summarily. I should dislike to suspend the membership of any boy, but if it becomes necessary, that is what I shall do. Furthermore, if the boy cannot be located, I shall close the club until he acknowledges his guilt."

Here was severity—unexampled severity—indeed! Outwardly, Mr. Disbrow's mien was very forbidding, but inwardly he was suppressing a desire to smile. It was not so very many years before that Mr. Disbrow himself would have

thought it a huge joke to have switched off the lights.

"However, I am not anticipating that anything of the sort will be necessary. I don't expect you to interfere with the lights again," he concluded.

If such really was his expectation, he was doomed to disappointment. It was inevitable that when the opportunity was ripe, the deed would again be committed. The time came one night several weeks later, when a special Young People's Service was being held in the big auditorium.

The organ was rolling forth the strains of "Onward, Christian Soldiers," the congregation was on its feet singing splendidly—when suddenly the organ stopped and darkness descended like a bolt from above. The voices of choir and congregation sang out loudly for a phrase or two without the organ accompaniment, wavered, and then stopped from sheer astonishment!

Down below, four figures scurried away in the darkness, while the sexton fumblingly made his

way the entire length of the basement to the switchboard.

It was fully five minutes before "Onward, Christian Soldiers" began again, doubtfully, at first, as though the singers feared that something else might befall them, but gaining volume and confidence as they sang.

The time had now come, Mr. Disbrow realized, for decisive action. He sent word to the official board, asking them to disregard his former suggestion that the switchboard be locked up. "We're going to settle this thing, the boys and I, and we're going to have the switchboard just as it is and still have it untampered with. These youngsters must be disciplined," his note concluded.

At the same time, the following notice was posted on the Boys' Club Bulletin Board:

I expect the boy who turned off the lights during the Young People's Service on Tuesday Evening, to come to me in my study some evening this week. Otherwise the club-room will be closed all next week.

G. N. DISBROW.

Disbrow knew his boys well, and he was confident that in time one of them would put in his appearance; but as several evenings passed without a visitor, he grew uneasy. Was his scheme, after all, to fail? It had been absolutely impossible to discover the offender by any simple means of detection at his command. Putting it up to the boy had seemed the only way left.

It was on Saturday that Tim appeared. He opened the door of Mr. Disbrow's study without knocking and walked into the room.

"I have just seen the notice, Mr. Disbrow. Otherwise I would have been here before. I haven't been around much this week."

"You mean you turned off the lights, Tim?" Mr. Disbrow asked after a moment.

"Why, of course," the boy smiled; "you didn't think it was Larry?"

Mr. Disbrow motioned him to a chair at the opposite side of the big oak table that stood in the center of the room and sat down facing him. He was very serious.

"Oh, come now," began Tim, "don't feel so bad about it. What's the use?"

Mr. Disbrow did not answer.

"Am I a problem?" Tim leaned forward, his elbows on the table, his face in his hands, mischief shining in his eyes.

Tim did not know how accurately he had diagnosed the situation. Here was just the type of boy that Mr. Disbrow wanted in the club—and yet one unruly member might disrupt the organization. He had thought that he had been getting on famously with Tim, that the club was beginning to make itself felt in his life and he realized that much depended on the present moment. The boy's spirit must not be broken and yet he must be given a sense of responsibility. He sparred for time to think.

"You say you haven't been around much this week. Why not?"

"Been working."

"What have you been doing?"

"Oh, lots of things."

"What?"

"Selling stamps, for one thing."

"Yes? How many have you sold?"

"Oh, I don't know . . . fifty dollars' worth, perhaps."

"Humph! Have you done anything else?"

"A few deliveries."

Mr. Disbrow was silent for a moment. Then—

"Tim, I'm not going to suspend your membership; I'm not going to send you to half a hundred people to apologize; I am just going to tell you how utterly disappointed I am. I like you. I thought that you liked me, but . . ."

He brushed aside an attempted interruption on Tim's part, and went on evenly:

"I thought that the Club meant a little to you. Then I have been trying to do something for you in a business way. I didn't think you would do anything that would hurt me as this has. I have no penalty to inflict other than the knowledge that you have made some one who cares for you, your well-wisher, suffer. Please go."



"I didn't think you would do anything that would hurt me as this has."

Mr. Disbrow's words cut deep. Tim attempted to speak, but Mr. Disbrow shook his head and the boy left the room.

It had been a part of Mr. Disbrow's plan to make Tim feel ashamed of himself. A better student of boy psychology than he realized, he had inflicted the severest kind of punishment and had, at the same time, bound Tim to him more firmly than before.

There were tears in Tim's eyes as he made for the street by a side exit.

CHAPTER IX

“THINKING” AND “DOING”

THE evening had only begun when Tim slipped away from the Grant Memorial Church. He had intended to spend several hours with the boys, playing billiards and enjoying the society of the club, but Mr. Disbrow's talk had taken away all relish for that sort of thing. He felt chagrined, at first, and then a bit resentful. It was only a joke, the turning off of the lights. Why should Mr. Disbrow regard it as so serious an offense—and why, above all, should he make it a personal matter? Of course he appreciated all that had been done for him. It was unkind to suggest that he did not!

More or less mechanically he got on a street car that would take him in the direction of home, inwardly rebelling at the sense of humiliation

which he could not help but feel. After a ride of a few minutes, the familiar lights of the Empire Theater caught his eye and, with a sudden impulse, he jumped off the car and walked up to the box office where he purchased a ticket.

Nodding in indifferent fashion to one or two of the ushers, he sank down into a seat and sulked, giving only a passing interest to the pictures. Perhaps, he thought, when the "movies" are over and the vaudeville begins, there will be something worth seeing.

Such, however, did not prove to be the case. Something was distinctly wrong with him; there could be no doubt about it, for he found the acts deadly dull—and worse! The hard lines underneath the rouge and powder on the face of Kitty Bellew, billed as "Vaudeville's Greatest Ingenue," were all that he could see to-night, though he had never thought of anything like that before. The jokes of the "Silly Billy Boys—Vaudeville's Sidewalk Conservationists, Par Excellence," were not such as he would have repeated to Mrs. Reed. There was a tone about

everything and everybody which was not pleasant to him.

"This place is certainly going to the bad, since I left it," he muttered to himself, in disgust.

After he had watched one or two other acts, and had come to the same conclusion, he arose and walked moodily out of the theater. There was no attraction there for him.

For a time he strolled up and down the streets, regretting that he had not gone into the club room, longing for the sociability which he knew he would have found there. Finally he jumped on a "Jitney" that would take him over into the neighborhood of the stores which were using the Pettibone Boys' Club's Delivery System. It was Saturday night and only a little after eight o'clock; there would still be many orders to deliver; here was something he could do.

About an hour later there was a prodigious knocking on the back door of Mrs. Reed's home. Mrs. Reed herself opened the door to admit Tim struggling with a box in which were piled all sorts of commodities. He placed his load on

the table and began to check it off by the order slip.

"One can of salmon, two loaves of bread, one bag of salt, three soap,"—he ran over the list with the glibness of a professional clerk while Mrs. Reed stood by, a smile in her eyes.

"There," he announced, "all complete; and according to this card this is your fifth delivery, Mrs. Reed. You owe us a twenty-five cent piece."

"I have it here ready for you and thank you." She extended the coin.

"And here's your stamp." Tim held out the little green Thrift Stamp and took the "quarter" in exchange.

"And how are the stamps going?" Mrs. Reed asked, pleasantly.

"Beautifully," Tim replied. "I guess we'll get rid of five hundred dollars' worth this month just through the deliveries."

There was no reason why he should stay longer, as his errand was done, but he made no movement toward the door.

"Is Larry home?" he inquired.

"No, he won't be home until late to-night, but won't you come in? I am a little lonely; I'd be glad to have you stay for a while and talk to me." Mrs. Reed had divined just what Tim wanted.

They made their way into the sitting room, and Mrs. Reed drew a large reclining chair up to the table, adjusted the back at a comfortable angle and motioned to Tim to sit in it, at the same time dropping down into a little rocker at his side. She didn't talk, nor did he—they just sat there quietly for a few moments. Tim, recalling the ribald gayety of the Empire Theater, was satisfied. Presently he spoke.

"Mrs. Reed, which is the most important, what you *think* or what you *do*?"

"It all depends, Tim. Really, I suppose what you *think*. You know what the Bible says, 'As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.' But why do you ask?"

And then Tim told her the story of the lights. It must be confessed that, had he been able to

see Mrs. Reed's face clearly, he would have noticed a smile flickering around the corners of her mouth.

"Now why, Mrs. Reed," Tim concluded, "does Mr. Disbrow have to make me feel so cheap, when he knows that I wouldn't do anything for the world to hurt him. Why, when I *think* of Mr. Disbrow, I only *think* the nicest things and yet because I *do* something—well, you see how he looks at it."

"That's what you meant by your question of thinking and doing, is it? Well, perhaps the answer is that you didn't think long enough or didn't think in the right direction. I don't regard this particular offense as a very serious one and I don't believe Mr. Disbrow does. Just show him by your actions that you're sorry and that you want to please him—that's all he could ask."

Tim nodded reflectively; then after a moment he began again:

"But you don't know the terrible things I think, Mrs. Reed. You don't know what goes on

inside of me. Why, if you did,"—the boy's voice rose in his excitement—"if you did, you wouldn't let me be sitting here with you. One minute I think this and another minute I think that." He rose and flung his arms upward with a gesture of despair. "I don't know what to make of myself."

Mrs. Reed made no comment as he walked around the room, though to herself she was saying: "It's the call of youth." He came back after several rapid strides and sat down beside her.

"There's nothing unusual in your feelings, nothing whatsoever," Mrs. Reed reassured him. "You are young; the great forces which you feel are the forces of youth striving for expression, battling with each other for supremacy. You probably have many talents within you, but they are sleeping, unorganized. They must be awakened, called into being, ordered and made to do your bidding.

"Just so," Mrs. Reed's tone was lower, "with your moral nature; the evil has to be downed so

that the good may come up victorious. Now, in your youth, is the time when the fight is to be waged. It will be a good fight and a winning one, too, I feel sure. Everything will come out right in the end and people will say 'Isn't he a strong character?' "

"Character!" Tim interrupted, "That's just what Larry was talking to me about once, . . . but I feel so confused," he broke off, "so mixed up. . . ."

"Don't worry about that; just set your eyes on the goal ahead and move toward it, and the further along you get and the more persistently you move, the more will confusion depart, and the way become clear."

"And now," Mrs. Reed rose, "we are going to have some hot chocolate. Just sit still while I prepare it."

Over their cups, a few minutes later, the conversation turned to Tim's home.

"You live with your sister, don't you?" she asked.

"No, it's a half-sister."

"Would she miss you if you should decide to make a change?"

"I should say not," Tim laughed. "She'd be glad to see the last of me."

"I have been thinking . . ." Mrs. Reed spoke deliberately, "we have a room on the third floor which we sometimes rent. I wonder if you would care to come here to live? Larry would be pleased." She didn't add, wise woman that she was, that she had any inkling of unpleasant conditions at Tim's boarding place. Larry, however, had told her enough for her to form her own opinion.

"Would I? Just try me and see," Tim answered. Then a shadow crossed his face. "But about the money—I—I—why—what does your room rent for?"

"Three dollars a week, with breakfast and supper."

"Why that's just what I pay Annie!" There was real relief in Tim's voice.

"Now isn't that nice," said Mrs. Reed, compli-

menting herself on her memory for small details.

So it was settled. And an hour or two later, when Larry returned and had been told the good news, Tim departed in high spirits, already thinking of the little Reed cottage as "home."

CHAPTER X

A CLASH AVERTED

ANNIE took Tim's departure just as he had known she would—indifferently and with only a moderate show of surprise.

"Perhaps it's just as well," she agreed. "The kids is growin' up and we need more room. When do you go?"

Tim, on the other hand, was sobered at the thought of leaving. He did not feel regret—there had been little in the relationship to arouse that emotion. Annie's home had, however, been the only home that he had known—and to be leaving it "for good" seemed strange, and altogether unbelievable.

Whatever doubt there had been in his mind as to the wisdom of his move was soon dispelled. He fitted in nicely with the Reed circle and after

two or three days he felt as if he had been there for years. The greater intimacy which he could now have with Larry, and the motherly attention which Mrs. Reed bestowed upon him, meant much to the boy. He was fired with an enthusiasm to make good, to deserve the respect of his friends.

In these first days, when Tim learned more of Larry's life, his admiration for him grew to still greater bounds. Larry's father had died many years before. The resources of the Reeds had been limited and until Larry went to work Mrs. Reed had found it difficult to make both ends meet. Boarders had helped until such time as Larry had been able to assume a part of the responsibility of home-making.

That time had come early in Larry's life. His tireless industry and his faculty for making friends, had off-set his lack of education, for he had gone to work at the end of his first year at high school. A minor position with Laidler Brothers, "House Furnishings," was soon succeeded by one of more importance and that by

another still further up the ladder. He had forged steadily ahead until now his earnings, with Mrs. Reed's income, made a comfortable living possible. Through it all had been evidenced the spirit of loving service. Many had remarked on his devotion to his mother and his evident satisfaction in being able to make things happier and easier for her.

"Peyser's coming up to-night," Larry said one evening about a week after Tim's arrival. "You know he works at the same place that I do, and there are one or two little accounts we want to go over. We can't seem to get the time at the office."

They were just sitting down to dinner, and no further reference was made to Peyser until near the end of the meal when Tim, glancing across at Larry, opposite him, remarked: "I think I'll stroll down to the club for a while. As Peyser's going to be here, you'll be busy."

"I think you'll do nothing of the sort," Larry objected. "You don't like Peyser and I know it, but he's really not half bad. You have to get

used to him. I thought once that he was impossible, but I didn't know him. You get to know folks and things strike you differently. Peyser's all bark and no bite."

"It may be, but, . . ." Tim's tone lacked conviction.

"I'm sure of it. He's helped me a lot down at the office, real, unselfish service. If it hadn't been for him I am not sure I would have got my last promotion. He had an opportunity to say something and he said it, and the result was that I moved up a peg."

"You mean to say Peyser's helped you along? I didn't think he ever helped anybody but himself."

"You've got him wrong," Larry insisted. "I'm going to bring you two together."

He did not, however, make much headway that evening. It was as much Tim's fault as Peyser's. Each looked upon the other with suspicion and every effort on Larry's part to promote a friendlier intercourse was unavailing.

When Larry and Peyser had finished their

business talk, the conversation turned to vacation plans for the approaching summer. "Do you know," Peyser began, "I wish we could arrange a camping party for the club."

"Why can't we?" Larry never saw difficulties in the way of club activities.

"Well . . ." doubtfully, from Peyser. "It seems to me it would be a good thing to do, but I haven't worked out any scheme."

"Had you thought of a place?"

"Yes, Star Lake."

"Oh, that's bully." Tim cast off his reserve in one moment of enthusiasm. "I went there once on an excursion."

"Star Lake?" queried Larry. "Where is it?"

"About forty miles up in the hills," Peyser explained. "A wonderful spot, all wild and rough; good fishing and swimming in the lake and the country is fine for hikes. I know a farmer up there and I think he'd let us have some of his lake front to camp on."

Larry looked reflective for a moment. "I think this is worth considering. Everybody has

to have a vacation and I am sure there must be a lot of fellows in the club who'd like to go up there for a couple of weeks. Perhaps we could run a regular camp for a month or two and have different bunches come up week by week. I'll go, if we can put the thing through."

"And I, too," Tim put in; "that is, if my vacation comes at the right time."

"I think we want to be careful about our crowd." Peyser looked significantly at Larry as he spoke. "We wouldn't care to let every one in on the proposition; that would spoil it."

"Oh, but it would have to be open to every one in the club if it was a club camp," Larry protested.

"Yes, I suppose so, but we could see to it that certain bunches went together and had things to themselves for their special week or two," Peyser concluded.

It may not have been so intended, but to Tim it seemed that Peyser was hitting directly at him. He knew that the boy disliked him and perhaps distrusted him. He admitted that he had reason,

but he was resentful that he chose to "rub it in" before Larry.

"I don't think there would be any difficulty about that," Tim flung out. "Probably those whom you don't want in your crowd would much prefer to be by themselves."

Larry was quick to see the way things were drifting, and just as on a previous occasion he had precipitated himself into the situation and prevented a clash, so again he came to the rescue.

"It's great stuff, this camping proposition," he enthused. "I'll take it up with Mr. Disbrow. But, right now, I'm wondering if you have heard Buck Evans' band play 'Sweet Evalina, My Gal,' after the 'Jazz' style. It's the greatest record ever put out by a talking machine company."

He stepped quickly over to the phonograph in the corner of the room and inserted a disc. Soon the strains of an irresistible rag-time piece played with all the elemental appeal and vim of the African negro at his best, filled the room. Larry kept time with his foot for a minute and then gave his

whole body over to the rhythm of the music, pirouetting gayly around. Before the record reached its end, all three boys had been won over by its fascinating weirdness and were venting their emotions in reckless dancing, swinging and swaying in absolute abandon with the piece.

Mrs. Reed came in upon the scene and stood in the doorway watching them. "What is this, an Indian pow-wow?" she asked.

Larry ran up to her and whirled her around with him until she plead for mercy and sank down into a chair, laughing.

"That sure is *some* record," Peyser declared enthusiastically when the last crash had died away. "Put it on again."

"Oh, no, please!—please! Once is all right, but twice . . . !" Mrs. Reed held up her hands in mock despair. "Let's have something soothing."

They went through the record books and played selection after selection. Larry had resolved that things should hum until Peyser went

home. There was to be no more time for verbal conflicts. When at last the breaking up of the party did come, he breathed a sigh of relief, feeling that while the two had not been brought closer together, at least the breach had not been widened.

He followed Peyser out on to the porch. Tim stood in the doorway.

"I suppose I'll see you at the basket-ball game to-morrow night," he sang out to the figure on the sidewalk.

"Surest thing you know. We're going to wallop that bunch, and if I can't play, at least I'll be there to shout. I hope you're in fine condition, Larry. Much depends on you and your crack shooting," Peyser called back.

"Never better," Larry answered confidently. "I'll put it into the basket every time, you'll see." He gave a parting salute to Peyser and turned to Tim.

"Now, old scout, it's bedtime. To-morrow's a big day for us. First we go to work, then we come home, and then we play the 'New Streeters'

for the championship of the Basket-ball League. We play, and we *win*—get me? Oh, it's a great world, old man, so many fine things to do in it. I love it. I'm glad I'm alive."

CHAPTER XI

OUT FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP

THERE was a busy hum in the general offices of The Eastern Hardware and Machinery Company. At one end of the room was the stenographic department, with its ceaselessly clicking typewriters. Next came the assistant department heads, each with his own neat oak desk, and a certain air of exclusiveness, secured, no doubt, by the low partitions, really little more than fences, which separated one "assistant" from another. And finally the bookkeepers, ranged against the wall, ponderous volumes and binders conveniently placed on shelves at their backs.

In the middle of the line of desks was Tim, perched on a high stool and absorbed in the book before him. The white page, with its rows upon rows of figures, fascinated him. Every now and

then he would look up, glance around the room with keen satisfaction, and return to his task. He loved the atmosphere of the business world.

Tim had made good progress. Mr. Disbrow, who was Vice-President of the company, had tried him out as office boy, but he had not kept him in that capacity for long. A minor opening in the bookkeeping department had occurred, and Tim was given an opportunity to show what he could do. He was naturally quick at figures, he had worked hard, had pleased his superior and had landed the job after two weeks' probation.

"Are you Mr. Scarsboro?" A piping voice interrupted Tim's process of addition. He raised his eyes from his ledger, his pen poised in air. He was not used to hearing the "Mr." before his name. A new boy was standing at his side.

"Yes," he answered, "what of it?"

"Mr. Disbrow would like to see you in his office."

It was with some misgiving that Tim obeyed the summons. He had not seen much of Mr.

Disbrow since his unhappy encounter with him over the lights in the church, and he was not quite certain of his reception. He had followed Mrs. Reed's advice and had tried to show by his actions that he was sorry for what he had done; he had kept on selling stamps, delivering packages, and furthering the club work in every way.

But his doubts were dispelled when he entered Mr. Disbrow's office.

"Good morning, Tim." Mr. Disbrow spoke kindly and motioned him to a seat.

"I've been watching you rather closely for the past few weeks," Mr. Disbrow began, "and I am much pleased with your work. An opportunity has come to place you in the advertising department and I have sent for you to see whether you would like to make the change."

"I am sure I would," the boy replied unhesitatingly.

"Good; I think it would be a wise move. If I am anything of a judge, you are a born advertiser. In this new position originality, initiative, and common sense will count. Of course you

will have to get into it by degrees, but you can do it."

"Thank you, I'll try."

"The salary—let's see, you are making twelve dollars now, aren't you? The salary will be fifteen dollars. You may take up your duties at once, reporting to Mr. Carson within the next hour."

Mr. Disbrow rose and held out his hand. "Now, good luck to you, and come to me if I can help you at any time. Remember, I don't want to be disappointed."

The glance that was exchanged as the two gripped hands was mutually enlightening. Tim felt that while Mr. Disbrow said nothing about it, he was wiping out the whole score against him. Well, he'd show him that his confidence was not misplaced. He would make good, no matter what sacrifice of personal convenience and time might be required.

That night as he dressed himself with special care in honor of the basket-ball game, he told the story of his advancement to Larry in staccato

sentences, shouted down the stairway from the third floor.

"Tickled most to death to hear it," came the answering cry. "I see that the president of that concern will have to watch his step or you'll be sitting in his mahogany chair! Perhaps I'll be sitting in one myself, too, and we can shake! But say, are you getting dressed or what are you doing? It's time we were going."

"I'll be down as soon as I get this tie fixed"—and almost upon his words, Tim came, resplendent with a green silk scarf to which, as he put it, he had "blown" himself in honor of his increased wage.

Tim was "taking" Larry's sister Ruth to the game and it was a novel experience for both of them. Ruth had never before been "escorted" to an entertainment by a young gentleman, except of course her brother, who "didn't count" in that capacity; while it must be confessed that the occasions on which Tim had asked for the honor of a young lady's company were very few. Mrs. Reed, with much inward amusement,

watched the flutter of excitement with which the two made their preparations. She, too, was going to the game; she never missed being present when Larry played, but she would not for one moment have thought of intruding upon the youthful pair.

The basket-ball team of the Pettibone Boys' Club was one of the star teams of the vicinity. It stood at the head of the league in which it played, its nearest competitor being the team from the New Street Methodist Church. If the Pettibone Club came out victorious in this battle with the "New Streeters," the championship would be decided; should the "New Streeters" win, however, the score would be a tie, both teams having then won and lost the same number of games. It was easy then to see that the battle was to be an historic one.

The game was played in the Y. M. C. A. court, around which ran an ample gallery. Here the friends of the two teams gathered; the New Street delegation on one side—the Grant Memorial "fans" facing them.

There was a great deal of good natured rail-lery. The cheering was incessant:

“Zing-a-ling-
Zing-a-ling-
Zing-a-ling-
Zing!
To those dear Granters
We won’t do a thing.”

cried the New Streeters, in chorus, over and over again. And with equal zest came the answer:

“Just you wait—
Just you wait—
The score will be
Naught to eight.
In whose favor?
Why don’t you see?
Of course in favor
Of the P. B. C.”

There were numerous other calls, as well as horn-blasts and clappers. The din was deafening—but it was fascinating. The contrast between the noisy cheering of those who watched, and the quiet, vigorous, well-directed playing in the open space below, was one which some of the older observers noted and commented upon.

"We aren't the 'doers' up here. We're just the shouters," one old man observed. "Gosh! I remember when I'd a' been in a thing like this,"—and his mind went back wistfully over the years.

Tim watched the playing carefully, following the game with scrupulous attention to detail, his eyes hardly leaving Larry's well knit figure as it worked in and out among the players.

Larry was center. His work was clean and sure, but his opponent's playing was marred by occasional lapses from what was regarded as "fair play," and there were many cries from the Grant Church section of "dirty work"! His infringement upon the rules were not such as called for his disqualification or censure from the umpire, but still they were infringements, and there was a growing sense of injustice among Larry's friends. As for Larry himself, he played on in true sportsman's fashion, never returning the kick or jab apparently given in accident, but which every basket-ball player recognizes and appreciates at its real value.

When the first half was called, the score stood six to eight in favor of the "New Streeters." Mr. Disbrow hurried to the dressing room where he found the boys excitedly discussing the game.

"Keep at it, just as you have been doing," he said in the lull which followed his coming. "Remember, it isn't the game that counts, it's the spirit of the thing. You cannot win by unfair means and rejoice in your victory, but you can lose and keep your pride."

It was much this same thought that was in Tim's mind. Mentally he was putting himself in Larry's place. If he were playing basket-ball and his opponent was getting the best of him, he wondered if he wouldn't jab him in the ribs provided he could do so without getting caught! He wondered if he would . . . or if he wouldn't! You can win on a foul sometimes. That's what he had been doing in days gone by—anything so long as he "got there." But looking at it from the point of view of a spectator, wasn't it a disgusting thing? He wondered if that was the way the Lord felt when He saw somebody

getting ahead by knifing the other fellow. "If He does," thought Tim, "He must have been pretty upset some of the times when He was watching me." But why doesn't the Lord interfere and knock the cheater down? That was the thing Tim couldn't understand!

He came to himself with a start. This wasn't entertaining Ruth!

"Isn't Larry wonderful?" he said to her.

"Yes, I suppose so; but who's the little fellow with the red hair? I like him."

"Oh, you sisters!" Tim rallied. "That's Martin Kelly, but my goodness, he can't hold a candle to Larry."

This opinion a hundred or more "Grant Memorialers" would have enthusiastically endorsed, a half hour later, when the game had been won for the P. B. C. through Larry's skillful playing.

"Just you wait—
Just you wait—
The score will be
Naught to eight.
In whose favor?
Why don't you see?"

Of course in favor
Of the P. B. C."

The finish had come in a wild climax; the score stood eleven to eleven. There was a half minute to play when the New Street center, moved, doubtless, by the exigencies of the situation, committed a violation of rules so flagrant that the umpire could not ignore it. He called a foul and the ball was given to Larry to be shot into the basket—if possible.

It was here that Larry showed poise and perfect self-control. Under a situation that would have strained the nerves of many a professional player, he seemed unmoved and with only five seconds before the half was up, he calmly tossed the ball into the basket! Pandemonium then broke loose in the audience, and while the cheering was at its height, the time keeper called forth his welcome announcement and all was over!

"Perhaps the Lord did strike him down to the ground, after all," Tim remarked, to the utter amazement of Ruth, who wanted to know what in the world he was talking about.

CHAPTER XII

ALL ABOARD FOR CAMP NEVERWORRY

WINTER gradually and reluctantly gave way to spring, but the change in seasons brought no change in interests on the part of the P. B. C. The boys had set a pace—and they intended to keep it. Moreover, they now had the fun of seeing others follow their lead. To be sure, no other organization delivered groceries or collected bad debts in order to raise money for Thrift Stamps, but still some societies and many individuals were stimulated by the industry of the club, and it is doubtful if any other little community in the country was more thoroughly awake to the national situation or understood better the virtues of Thrift Stamps than did Westvale.

“And it’s all because those youngsters put over something that most people thought was absurd,” observed one of the club’s older friends. “Its

very absurdity has proved to be good advertising; they've had everybody watching their doings and helping them along. Why, Disbrow tells me they have sold, in all, close on to ten thousand dollars' worth of stamps. Now that's what I call real patriotic service."

The Boys' Club had not only served, it had learned the joy of service. The members were so bound up in the good time they were having and in trying to out-do one another, that they had lost sight of the fact that they were really doing a big thing—which was quite as it should have been.

Tim had been heart and soul in the work. If there was one boy upon whom Mr. Disbrow relied more than upon any other, excepting Larry of course, it was Tim. It almost seemed as if he devoted every moment of his time outside of his working hours to furthering the club's programs. If it had been suggested, however, that he was sacrificing himself, he would have laughed at the idea. He was having the best possible lark!

With the coming of June days, the club was, of necessity, less active. Many of the boys, as soon as school closed, went away with their families for the entire summer; others were planning shorter trips for later on. To those remaining at home—and the entire membership was never away at one time—were left the canvassing of the Thrift Stamp subscribers and the delivering of orders; but the work was light and it took only a small part of the original force to attend to it.

“My! but we will make things hot after Labor Day, when everybody’s back,” was Tim’s comment after he had reviewed the situation with Mr. Disbrow one evening.

“That’s right, keep things humming,” Mr. Disbrow advised. “It’s only to be expected that for the next few weeks there will be a slowing up of the machinery. In fact—doesn’t the club’s official vacation come pretty soon—the camping party?”

“It sure does,” Tim replied, “next week, and I’m looking forward to it, too, you can bet.”

In the long spring evenings that had preceded this conversation, the plans for the P. B. C. Camp had been carefully laid and perfected. Peyser's suggestion had met with instant favor, not only among the boys, but with Mr. Disbrow who had himself promised to act as Camp Director and to secure some one to take his place should business require his absence. So many boys wanted to take advantage of the outing that it looked as if Camp Neverworry, as it had been named, was going to be a very populous little settlement.

At last came the morning when the party was to leave,—a bright, clear day just made for an excursion into the open. A huge motor truck had been hired for the occasion, and on this was piled the camping equipment—four tents, cooking utensils and a motley array of bags.

Star Lake lay about forty miles to the north; there was before the boys a wonderful ride "over the hills and far away," through country towns and villages, past miniature forests and well-kept farms—it was a most inviting prospect.

After seemingly endless delays they were un-

der way, a noisy crowd bent on making the most of every moment of their holiday. Tim and Larry sat perched on a mound of something soft near the back of the truck, watching silently the retreating road.

"Makes me think of the war," Tim said. "Haven't you seen pictures like this, of soldiers being transported across country to a new camp?"

"But a far different kind of camp," Larry rejoined soberly. "Oh, the injustice of the whole thing sometimes knocks me out. I wonder what right we have to be so happy when others are so unhappy!"

"Are they unhappy? Not if they are of the right kind!" Tim asked and answered his own question.

"I suppose that's so. If you are doing what you know is right, you are likely to have a satisfied feeling." Larry elaborated Tim's thought.

"Course it is. Why, gosh, to hear soldiers talk you would think there wasn't anything worth doing but soldiering. They have the best time in the world, they say. Unhappy—humph! the

Fritzie is unhappy when the Americans get after them, but they're the only sad-eyed soldiers, I guess."

"I wish I could get into it. It makes a fellow feel sort of cheap to think that somebody else is off fighting his battles."

Tim looked at Larry in surprise. They had never discussed the war from this angle.

"I can't go," Larry continued, "on account of my mother, of course. There isn't money enough for her and for Ruth. If it were not for them, I'd be over there by this time."

"Gee, if I had a mother like yours, I wouldn't even be thinking about it!" Tim blurted out, and then catching the hurt expression on Larry's face he hurried on—"Forget it—you are needed here. Right in little old Westvale is where your front line trench is. Now as for me, I haven't got any mother or anybody else, and, though I hadn't thought of it before, I don't know why I shouldn't go."

Now Larry was quick to expostulate. "But you're not old enough."

"Yes, I am. I'm seventeen in a few weeks—and you can enlist when you're seventeen, with your parents' consent."

It was now Larry's turn to assume the defensive.

"Well, even so, you're too young," he stated conclusively.

"You're a lot older, you are," Tim flung back, good naturedly, "at least three years! You talk like my grandfather. Nevertheless, Daddy, I'm going to think about it, but I'll promise not to enlist without your consent." He laughed saucily and Larry joined in with him, and they soon fell to discussing the scenery again.

They ate their lunch that day under a big tree by the side of a brook. It seemed to all of them that food had never tasted so good. The early morning ride had given them keen appetites, and it was not many minutes before everything eatable, excepting the supplies which were to be a part of the camp stores, had disappeared. Presently they resumed their journey, rolling along, bumping along, and feeling the fascination of the

unknown road. The further they went, the higher the hills, the rockier the road-bed, the more unspoiled the view.

At four o'clock they had their first glimpse of Star Lake, a circular body of water about one mile across. It was named for a curious legend, something to the effect that the stars of the heavens had been reflected on the calm surface of the waters for so many summer nights, that the images had been caught and held in the bosom of the lake, and if one looked into its cool depths in mid-day, one could still see the stars faithfully mirrored there. Of course not every one could see them—one had to know just how and where to look.

The lake snuggled down into a hollow of the hills. It was surrounded by green banks, groves of trees dotting them here and there. High up on one of the banks was Star Village, consisting of half a dozen houses, a school, a church and a store, which was also a postoffice.

It was toward the village that the boys' truck moved, but when they approached within half a

mile of it, they turned off into a lane that wound slowly down to the water. On a grassy bank, sheltered by a hedge of trees and located about one hundred feet from the shore, they stopped and made their camp.

That first night they did little more than cook their supper, erect their tents and gather a few boughs for the foundation of their beds. The morning would give time for nice attention to details.

Whether the beds were comfortable or not was a minor consideration to the boys—they would have slept happily on stones, they were so delightfully tired!

CHAPTER XIII

THE BELL AT MIDNIGHT —!

THE shrill call of a bugle rang out in the crisp morning air. Almost at once, from four tents, there issued protests, couched in various phrases and pitched in various tones, but all of the same import! It simply couldn't be time to get up! A second blast removed all doubt, however, and soon the boys of Camp Neverworry were tumbling out of the tents and scrambling down the bank to the lake for their morning dip.

The days were flying past all too quickly for the campers—the second week of their vacation was just beginning—the first one had been spent in an exhilarating round of boating, bathing, shore parties, long tramps, and the joy of freedom in the open air. Under Mr. Disbrow's direction, order had soon been established and camp



The days were flying past all too quickly for the campers.

life reduced to a system. Everybody got up at five-thirty and breakfasted an hour later. Bathing was permitted within certain prescribed limits and boating also had its restrictions. One had to report at the camp for dinner at twelve-thirty, supper was at six, and evenings, unless there was some very good reason, were spent around the camp-fire. Arbitrary rules these seemed to some of the campers who were at first inclined to rebel against them, but Mr. Disbrow's hand was firm and it did not take the boys long to discover that the schedule had been made out for their own comfort and happiness and that by following it they would have the best possible time.

It was a country circus that caused the first deviation from Mr. Disbrow's rule of "All Home Nights." Every available signboard and many of the barns and out-buildings of the neighboring farms were brilliantly decorated with posters announcing the arrival in Brewster Township of "Pinkerton's Mammoth Circus," "Special Appearance For One Day Only." Brewster Township lay about five miles beyond Star Village and

nothing would do but that the boys should get up an excursion to the circus. And, of course, it must be the evening performance!

"Why, it's lots more fun in the evening, all the lights and—and—and . . . Well, it's lots more fun in the evening," Martin Kelly concluded lamely, directing a most beseeching gaze at Mr. Disbrow.

"It would be just a nice walk, five miles there and five miles back," put in Parsons. "And there is nothing so nice as a country road in the moonlight." Parsons was always poetical.

"What time do you suppose you would get back?" Mr. Disbrow asked.

"Oh, it wouldn't be later than twelve," Bert Simmons replied. "Please, Mr. Disbrow."

"Of course I can't go," Mr. Disbrow seemed to be thinking aloud. "Bob Smith is sick, you know, and I'll have to stay with him."

"Oh, but there would be Larry. You'll go, won't you, Larry?" It was Peyser this time who joined the argument.

"Sure, I'll go, I'd like to," Larry answered.

Mr. Disbrow hesitated a moment longer and then gave his consent.

“But I’ll count on your getting home just as soon as you can,” he cautioned. “Remember, I’m responsible for you lads. Don’t give me any anxious hours.”

So it was settled and soon after supper that night a gala party started out for the circus.

Many of the boys had attended Barnum & Bailey’s gigantic performance or had seen Buffalo Bill’s Wild West—but it is to be doubted if any of them, even with this experience, ever enjoyed anything in the way of an entertainment as much as they did this one-ring performance. The acrobats were not particularly efficient, the animals were few and sickly, the clowns,—there were two of them,—were sorry failures so far as humor was concerned, and the elephant absolutely refused to stand on his pedestal in the picturesque attitude which the trainer so earnestly desired. In spite of all these draw-backs, perhaps because of them, that circus was not soon to be forgotten. The flickering lights from the kerosene torches,

the shaky tiers of rough board seats, the popcorn and peanuts boy, the pink lemonade, the wonderful brass band, and above all the intimacy between performers and audience—one could almost reach out and touch the shaggy mane of the Shetland pony—ah, this was indeed a circus!

After the show the boys hung around and watched the men pack away in their mysterious-looking wagons the circus equipment—they had even begun to take the tent down before the audience left. Remembering their promises to Mr. Disbrow, they did not delay long but soon took the trail for home.

It was a moonlight night and they started off at a brisk pace and in less than an hour Star Village was reached.

“What’s that little old building up on the knoll?” Martin Kelly inquired of no one in particular. “I’ve been wanting to go up there and see for several days.”

“Looks to me like a school; probably *the* school of the vicinity,” Larry surmised.

“Seems to me it’s rather deserted-looking for

a school. Why, even the windows are open! Wouldn't it make a bully camp! Come on, bunch, let's go up and see what it is. It will only take a minute." Martin broke away from the group and started up the hill, Tim, Larry and several others with him. Peyser and the boys with whom he was walking and who were a little in advance of the others, continued in the direction of Camp Neverworry.

Martin went up to the open window of the building and peered curiously in. It proved to be—as Larry had thought—a school. Beyond the entry into which the window opened, could be seen a roomful of desks.

"What's this, do you suppose?" Martin touched a rope that hung from the ceiling, only an arm's length from the window.

"It's the bell rope, of course. But come, let's beat it. The others are getting ahead of us." Without waiting to see whether his invitation was accepted or not, Larry started down the slope.

A moment later the quiet air of a country mid-

night was ruffled by the peal—peal—peal—of a bell! Again it rang, again and again, an ominous sound in the little sleeping hamlet. Larry turned quickly up the hill again, but before he regained the summit the bell had clanged out its brassy cry dozens of times—or so it seemed to Larry, who was thoroughly alarmed at the possible consequences.

He rushed up to the window—no one was there but the rope inside was still swaying. Down below in the road he could make out several boys, and as they saw that he spied them, there came up to him this call:

“Come on, Larry, come on; don’t be standing there pulling that bell all night.”

He quickly joined the group.

“You shouldn’t have done that. Why, there is no telling what may happen now. That may be the fire alarm . . .”

“Don’t you think it was a good idea,” Tim broke in, “to wake this old town up? It has been asleep for too long.”

“Did you ring that bell, Tim?”

"We all rang it, the whole six of us. We each put one hand on the rope," Martin Kelly explained. "Tim's hand was at the bottom so he didn't do the most."

Just then the conversation was interrupted by a voice from a farmhouse across the way.

"What's the trouble? Where's the fire? Or ain't there any fire?"

No answer came from the several figures that slipped quietly away in the shadows of the trees.

A few minutes later Larry described the episode to Mr. Disbrow and anxiously watched the lights moving about on the hill. Before long they thankfully saw them, one by one, die out.

"I guess it's all over and they have decided to go back to their sleep," remarked Larry, breathing more easily.

"I hope so," but there was a worried look in Mr. Disbrow's eyes.

It was, indeed, not all over! The next morning while the camp was at breakfast and living over with huge enjoyment its escapade of the

night before, a man deliberately walked up to the out-door dining room and surveyed the boys stolidly for a moment and then said in solemn tones:

“I pernounce you all under arrest.”

“And who may you be?” Mr. Disbrow spoke calmly.

“I’m Justice of the Peace of this here Township, and I pernounce you all under arrest fer disturbin’ the quiet of a peace lovin’ community.” He chewed at a straw which he held between his lips.

“I suppose you refer to the ringing of the school bell last night?” Mr. Disbrow inquired.

“I do; and fer breakin’ into school property and alarmin’ our people unnecessary, I pernounce you all under arrest.”

Mr. Disbrow held out his hands. “Well, here they are—what are you going to do with them? Are you going to take them with you—the twenty-four of them?” He was sparring for time.

The man deliberated. “No, I’ll let ’em go free

till to-night, if you'll promise to have 'em there."

"Have them where?"

"Up to the school house at nine o'clock."

"All of them?"

"Well, all as is in on this thing. You know what I mean and, by gum, I won't stand no funny business! I'm Justice of the Peace, see?"

"Yes, I see, all right. Well, there were only six of the boys in this thing."

"Those six I pernounce under arrest."

"Very well, I'll have them there."

"See to it that you do," he threatened and turned on his heel.

His departure was followed by a round of laughter in which even Mr. Disbrow joined. "But, boys," he said, "this may be more serious than it seems."

"Oh, he'll probably let us off with a reprimand," Larry suggested.

"Yes, probably," Mr. Disbrow agreed, "but not certainly. However, I don't know as there is anything we can do about it until the time comes."

The time came all too soon for the six boys in question. As the hour drew nearer, they became more nervous until finally, when they found themselves entering the school, they were, as Kelly put it, "all in a quake."

Apparently the Star Villagers were going to make this "trial" quite the social event of the season. They were gathering from far and near and were disposing of themselves on the benches in the school-room. Six chairs were conspicuously arranged in a semi-circle on the platform and to these the culprits were led. The other boys of Camp Neverworry joined the villagers. Mr. Disbrow sat up near the front where he could watch the proceedings. The room was lighted with oil lamps which cast weird shadows on the floor and walls and did not add to the boys' comfort.

"Gee, if they'd only have the thing lit up so you could see what was what it wouldn't be so bad," Tim complained. "I'm expecting somebody to jump out of the corner and swat me over the head."

His mutterings were interrupted by a loud bang on the table.

"This court room will come to order," announced the Justice of the Peace. "We have met here this evenin'" he continued, "to mete out punishment to these here rascallions who come into our quiet neighborhood and . . . and . . ."—he floundered for a flowery phrase, but not getting it, he ended lamely with—"and keep us awake nights ringing our school bells." He glared at the "prisoners." "What we want to know is, what you did it fer? You, there, on the end, what'd you do it fer?"

It was Tim who was on the end.

"Fer fun!" Tim could not miss the chance to mimic the Justice.

"Fun, hey? Is that your idee of fun? Well we'll show you what *our* idee of fun is before we get through with you. You next? What did *you* do it fer?"

"I guess we didn't think it would bother anybody," Martin Kelly answered.

"Think—course you didn't think. Don't you

know it's agin' the law to break into buildings?"

"We didn't break into the building—we just reached in."

"No back talk there!" The Justice banged the gavel on the table.

"May I interrupt?" Mr. Disbrow rose and with a sweeping bow of elaborate grace begged to say a word in behalf of the offenders. He turned and addressed the villagers for he saw that they were to be the "jury."

"Ladies and gentlemen! I do not wish to condone the conduct of my boys. It was very thoughtless of them to ring the bell, but, after all, is it so serious a matter that it cannot be overlooked? Did you, never, as children ring door bells? And were you not, in doing such a thing as that, exceeding the proprieties almost as much as these boys did when they rang the school bell? I beg of you, good friends, to remember that these are boys on their vacation and . . ."

The gavel descended and cut Mr. Disbrow's words short.

"That'll do," decreed the Justice of the Peace. "I'm tryin' this case. I agree with all that you have said and I'm goin' to be easy. I'm not goin' to lock these boys up and make 'em jail birds. I'm simply goin' to fine 'em. One—two—three—four—five—six of 'em. Well, we'll make it thirty dollars fer the lot. That'll go a little ways toward paintin' this here school buildin'. And another time, young gentlemen, don't be ringin' school bells unless you are appointed to do it by the teacher. Thirty dollars, please."

"I rise to protest," Mr. Disbrow was on his feet again. "This is an outrage."

"Forty dollars," came the Justice's answer. "Ten added fer impudence."

Mr. Disbrow sank down on the bench thoroughly humbled.

Then he rose again. "But, I say, we haven't got that much money all together. I told the boys, when they came on this trip, not to bring money with them. It wasn't safe for them to have it here."

"Well, then, I don't see but it's jail. What do

you say, folks?" The Justice looked around at his friends.

"Forty dollars is right," "Forty dollars," "Stick to it, Judge," came from different parts of the room.

"See?" The Justice turned to Mr. Disbrow. "I'm just executin' the law. These people here hold up my hands. Forty dollars it is, or jail."

"Will you take my check? I have my check book—" Mr. Disbrow's tone was meek.

"No!" thundered the Justice of the Peace. "No check. How do I know 'twould be good—or you might stop payment. Real money!"

The six boys, their faces white with fear, held a hurried consultation.

"We've only got eighteen dollars altogether," they announced.

"Sorry." The Justice looked grieved, or pretended to.

Just then there was a movement at the back of the room and Peyser came forward and without a word laid four bills on the table before the Justice.

"There's forty dollars," he stated. "Now can they go?"

The officer quickly seized the money, "I knew you had it all the time. Yes, yes, court's adjourned. But I warn you, don't do anythin' like it again or it will go more serious with you."

At once the boys thronged around Peyser and Mr. Disbrow.

"How did you happen to have so much money?" Mr. Disbrow asked.

"Well, you see," Peyser explained, "I got my month's pay the day before I came away and I didn't have time to bank it, and anyway, I didn't know how much I'd want to use up here, so I brought along all I had left after I'd paid my board and bills. I don't believe in skimping myself on my annual vacation, anyhow."

"Lucky thing you don't," Mr. Disbrow remarked. "You solved a nasty predicament. I don't believe we could have raised that much money among us—though I still don't believe in keeping real cash in a camp—" he laughed.

"Oh, but *we* do," several boys shouted.

"It sure was good of you, Peyser," Martin Kelly sang out, "especially as you weren't in on the thing."

"That's the part of it I regret," Peyser admitted. "Wish I had been! Purest accident I wasn't. If I'd known there was a bell to ring I would have been on hand, believe me!—but somehow my bunch got separated from the 'bell-ringers' and 'twas all done before I knew it!"

"It makes me boil!" Disbrow exclaimed. "It isn't legal. This court—why, it's a farce, but still what can you do? We could protest, I suppose, but I doubt if it would do any good."

"The thing to do, it seems to me, is for each one of us to chip in and pay his share; it will be less than seven dollars apiece," Tim volunteered.

Mr. Disbrow interrupted with—"Well, I guess you don't pay my ten dollars. I'll take care of my own impudence! It will only be five apiece."

"Well, five apiece then, and gosh, I think it was worth it!"

They passed out of the building. As they did

so Tim came into line with Peyser. "Thank you, old man," he said, "it was fine of you."

"I didn't do it for you," Peyser answered, "I couldn't let the bunch suffer." He hurried along to the front of the column, leaving Tim to walk by himself at the rear.

CHAPTER XIV

A HIKE AND AN ACCIDENT

LARRY and Tim were off for an all-day hike. They had started early in the morning, carrying full lunch boxes and armed with big sticks to assist them in the climbing which they expected to do. The route which they had mapped out was to take them half way around the lake and then inland a few miles to a Revolutionary battle-field. The return trip would bring them around the other side of the lake and through a country dotted with places of historic interest.

Noon-time found them across the lake at a point about opposite the camp. They had lingered on the road, now shying stones into the water, now sitting idly on some big rock, now investigating a bit of shell or water formation on the shore.

On a high bank overlooking the lake the boys

threw themselves down and stretched out full length for a brief rest before they ate.

"I'll be thinking of this when I'm sweating back there in the office," Tim drawled lazily, rolling over and looking up into the leafy boughs of the tree that sheltered them from the sun. "There's nothin' like it, is there, lying flat on the grass under a tree in summer!"

"It's been a bully vacation, hasn't it?" Larry remarked after a moment.

"It sure has, I'll never forget it," Tim enthused. "But all good things have to come to an end."

"Yes, and remember there's work waiting for us at home. Thrift Stamps! Thrift Stamps! Thrift Stamps! We've got to sell enough to make a paper shortage in the government mills this fall."

"You bet!"

"And then," Larry continued, "we've got the Year Book to put over. That comes out in September. We always have to hustle around to sell the edition and if we don't sell all we print we

lose money. We simply can't go behind on it this year."

"The Year Book . . . humph . . . I'd almost forgotten it," Tim mused.

"I shouldn't think *you'd* forget it. Didn't you enter the story contest?" Larry asked.

Tim did not reply, but sat up and began to open the package of luncheon. Taking out a generous sandwich he passed the box to Larry.

"That's the idea, I'm so hun—gry!" Larry helped himself to two sandwiches and, holding one in each hand, looked at them doubtfully, considering whether he should eat the egg first or the ham.

"Larry, if you'd done something," Tim said between bites, "that you shouldn't, and it wasn't going to hurt anybody, ought you to tell about it?"

"I don't know," Larry answered, indifferently, and proceeded to devour the egg sandwich.

"Pay attention to me! I want your advice."

"That's cheap! Are you sure that's all you want?"

"If you won't be serious for a minute I'll tell you something that'll make you. I stole the story that I sent in to the Year Book."

"Um—humph! That's nice," Larry commented.

Tim saw that Larry thought he was joking.

"I mean it. I copied it from a book, changing the names and a few other little things. It was called 'Tam O'Shanter' and I called it 'The Boy with the Girl's Hat.' It was written by somebody named Johnson."

"You mean it, Tim?" At last Larry was sober. "You really mean it?"

"Yes—" The expression on Larry's face cut Tim to the quick and he turned away to hide his shame. Then, after a pause—"What I want to know is, whether I ought to tell Mr. Disbrow—"

"Oh, Tim—" Larry began and all the gayety had gone out of his voice.

"Now see here, Larry, do you remember, a long time ago, when we were talking about fakes in theaters, and the fact that both sides of the scenery weren't alike, you said you would make

me paint both sides of my life alike, and I told you it would take a lot of paint? Well, when I swiped the story the paint was only just beginning to be applied; but honest, Larry,"—there was a pleading note in his voice,—“honest, I’m trying my best and I think it’s beginning to be alike now on both sides. Won’t you believe it?” He looked Larry full in the face.

“Yes, I do believe it, Tim—I *know* it,” Larry assured him, “but I’m sorry for what’s been done because it will be a lot of trouble to right it!”

“Why can’t we just forget the thing?” Tim questioned. “Why need anybody know but you.”

“Suppose your story should win the prize, what then?”

“Oh, but it won’t.”

“I should think it had a pretty good chance—a professional story teller against a lot of beginners.”

“Oh, gosh, I hadn’t thought of that.” There was real anguish in Tim’s words. “Why, I could never accept a prize for that!”

"Of course you couldn't," Larry agreed. "What you'll have to do will be to go to Mr. Disbrow and ask him to have the story withdrawn, and you will have to go right away because the judges are deciding now."

"Oh, dear," Tim sighed, "seems to me I'm always having to go to Mr. Disbrow and tell him what a wretch I am."

"Mr. Disbrow understands, and would know, as I know, that this is a thing of the past, a thing that you wouldn't stoop to now, and he would respect you for resurrecting it yourself when it might sleep on."

"I wish it *could* sleep on."

"Well, it can't. Now that's settled and we won't talk about it any more. Here, I want an apple." He reached for the box and selected a luscious looking one.

Tim's appetite, however, was gone.

They lolled around for an hour and then made their way to the battlefield, marked with huge boulders commemorative of the bravery of those who had fought and died there years before.

"Soldiers—soldiers—soldiers—! They work under orders and if they don't obey they get shot." Tim's eyes rested reflectively on the broad slopes before him; he was mentally peopling them with the brave men of the Revolution. "It must be a fine thing," he went on, "to know that you are under orders; that there are certain things you must do, certain things you must not, and that it's up to somebody else to do the choosing. I think I'd like to be taken in hand and bossed around for a while—"

"If you're getting back to that old talk of enlisting, I'm changing the subject right away," Larry interrupted. "Besides, without being preachy at all, I suppose we are all 'under orders.' It's certainly specified clearly enough what we should and should not do."

"Yes, but the settlement is so far off, maybe we don't stop to think; whereas in the army, if you commit a military sin,—right away—oh blooey, blooey—you get it!"

"Well, one thing I know and that is, that we are under orders to be home at six o'clock and

we'll have to speed it up a bit." Larry looked at his watch. "It's a little after three now."

They were hot and tired and dusty when, some little time later, they struck the shore road—and a dip in the cooling waters of the lake was quickly decided upon.

"See right up there where there's a little bay? Well, me for there!" Larry exclaimed. "I'll bet it's great diving off that rock that sticks out on the end of the bank. We'll have to make it short though—and then take the rest of the home stretch in double quick time. I never wanted a swim more in my life—I'm so sticky I feel the way the cat looked when she got into the fly paper."

They made a dash for the cove and soon Larry was in the water, splashing and gurgling like a porpoise and calling to Tim to hurry up. Tim, meanwhile, sat on the bank, his preparations having consisted of the removal of one shoe.

"Now for a dive." Larry came out of the water, clambered up the bank, walked out to the projecting rock and gracefully dived off, only to

reappear a moment later in the water below, striking out with strong steady strokes for the shore.

Tim watched him, lazily considering whether he should follow him or not.

Larry scurried up the bank again and with a call to "Come on in, you old mole, it's fine," plunged once more into the cooling depths.

Tim indifferently regarded the spot where Larry had gone out of sight and looked for him to come up a few feet away. Larry was an expert swimmer. He had been known to stay under for several seconds and to come up where he was least expected.

"This time," Tim spoke aloud, "I think he's going to bob up about—*there*." He threw a pebble into the lake and then watched to see how nearly correct his calculation would be.

The quiet surface of the water, however, had an ominous look and when, after a moment, Larry did not come up, tousled and breathless as before, Tim's indifference vanished. He jumped to his feet.

"Larry! Larry! *Larry!*" he called.

There was no answer. He ran to the water's edge and looked in every direction. It was not like Larry to play a joke; it would have been possible, perhaps, for him to have crept ashore without being seen, but Tim quickly dismissed this from his mind. Larry was under the water and something had happened to him.

"Help! Help! Help!" Tim cried wildly—but he did not repeat the call, because it was evident that no one was within sound of his voice. Throwing off his coat he rushed into the water heading for the place where he had last seen Larry.

Tim, too, was an expert swimmer, but he had not Larry's endurance. He made one or two attempts at diving downwards, but came up speedily, panting for breath. Finally, his face drawn with suffering and fear, he went down once more, summoning all his strength for a last search for his friend.

There was little current in the lake and Tim had judged his distance pretty accurately. This

time he was successful,—in fact, he almost touched Larry on his first downward plunge. Seizing him by his hair he rose to the surface and struggled to the shore.

For a moment Tim was so weak that he could do no more than drag Larry's head above the water, then he fell back on the bank and faintness came over him, but soon he roused himself.

"My God! This won't do. I've got to think; help me to think."

Recalling a little of what he had read about first aid to the drowning, he dragged Larry to the grass a few feet away and rolled him over, face downward, on the ground, and straddled him. Then he placed his hands on Larry's ribs and pressed them in and out, in and out. . . . He kept this up for several minutes and then turned him over and began to pump his arms up and down.

"He's got to breathe," he moaned, "he's got to! Oh, Lord, make Larry breathe."

He did not stop to see whether his efforts were bringing results or not until a flicker of the eye-

lids gave him assurance that Larry was not dead.

"It's coming," he cried, tears streaming down his face, "his breath is coming," whereupon he attacked his patient with even more vigor. Respiration soon became more normal and, although Larry's eyes did not again open, Tim saw that he was out of immediate danger. It was only then that he noticed a jagged cut on Larry's forehead which told the story of the accident. In his dive Larry had hit upon some object which had knocked him senseless.

"I guess I can leave him now for a minute, and see if I can get help." Tim was shaking from the cold of his wet clothes and his fright and his words were so mingled with sobs that they could hardly have been understood, even had any one been there to hear them.

He went up to the road, a distance of some fifty feet, and looked up and down, but it was a particularly wild section of the country and not a house or a human being was to be seen. He walked down to a turn, hoping that around the bend there might be something, but there was not.

He could not leave Larry and yet—how was he to get help?

Returning to the lake, he wound some of Larry's clothes around him and, lifting him to his back, started uncertainly in the direction of camp. He did not know just what he was going to do; that would depend on how far he could go with his burden. It was impossible, he knew, for him to reach camp as that would be a distance of several miles, but he hoped to find a house near by. Every step hurt him unspeakably, for Larry was a heavier lad than he, and the experience through which Tim had passed had deprived him of much of his strength.

He had progressed perhaps a quarter of a mile when he heard the puffing of a motor-cycle. He stepped into the middle of the road, determined that nothing should pass him by. The machine shot up at a terrific speed and halted some feet beyond him.

"Almost drowned," Tim panted. "Camp Neverworry—over there." He pointed vaguely toward the opposite shore and then collapsed.

The motor-cyclist quickly grasped the situation. He placed the boys in a sunny spot and covered them up with some of his own wraps, then turned his machine around and headed for Camp Never-worry.

Fortunately, there were not many camps on Star Lake and the motorist had no difficulty in finding the one he sought. Almost before he had finished telling his story, Mr. Disbrow had started for the village after one of the two or three little Fords of which the town boasted.

It was a sad party that returned to the camp an hour later. Larry had regained consciousness and, though he was very weak, he was able to walk from the automobile to his tent, but Tim, despite the brave effort he made to walk unassisted, failed dismally and had to be carried to his bed.

CHAPTER XV

BITTER DAYS OF TRIAL

MR. DISBROW lost no time in making arrangements to get the boys home. Camp Neverworry was not the place for two really sick lads and although he realized that it was somewhat hazardous to transport them forty miles across country, he preferred to take that risk rather than to remain in camp with them. He chartered an automobile, the most comfortable one he could find, and propped Tim and Larry up with pillows and quilts on the rear seat. Then, with a parting word to the campers whom he was leaving, and particularly to Peyser, who had been placed in charge, the "ambulance train"—as Tim, with a touch of his old self had christened the big automobile—headed for Westvale. Three hours later they arrived; and very soon

thereafter, Larry and Tim were in bed and under the doctor's care.

Events of the succeeding days proved that Mr. Disbrow had acted wisely. Larry's injury was not serious; but Tim rapidly grew worse.

"I am afraid we shall have to face a siege with pneumonia," Dr. Leonard said the second day after the boys' return. "The shock of the cold water in Tim's over-heated condition, and the fact that he kept his wet clothes on for an hour or so, are enough to bring on a severe cold anyway. I have been fighting its development into something worse—but I do not like the symptoms."

The next morning it became evident that the doctor's worst fears were to be confirmed—Tim was gradually sinking lower and lower. Pneumonia it was, indeed!

Everything was done in these days of bitter trial, that it was possible to do to alleviate the lad's suffering and to improve his chances of recovery; but despite the best of care and medical attention he seemed weaker with each hour and

less able to resist the ravages of the disease. At length came the ninth day, when it was expected that the illness would reach its crisis.

"It has been a hard fight, but to-night will see the decision," Dr. Leonard announced that afternoon as he was leaving. "We must hope for the best. I'll be back in an hour or so."

"But, doctor," Mrs. Reed laid a detaining hand on his arm, "what are the chances?"

"One can never tell with pneumonia," he answered. "The boy's constitution is good. He hasn't the best lungs in the world, but still I believe he will pull through. Tell the nurse to follow my instructions absolutely and to 'phone me if there is any change."

He walked quickly down the stairs. Just before he passed out he stuck his head into the sitting room.

"And how's my other patient?" he called out cheerily. Larry jumped to his feet.

"Oh, I'm all right," he replied, although the pallor of his face and the slight shakiness in his walk belied his words,—“but how's Tim?"

"About the same, my boy. The worst will be over to-night, and I suppose by next week you'll both be running around here as wild as ever!" With a cheery nod the doctor departed.

The suspense seemed unendurable. Mrs. Reed went about her household duties, summoning all her strength to give the appearance of calm at which her son marveled. But all the while there was running through her mind the doctor's remark, "If he lives through to-night, he will get well." *If—If—If*—everything seemed to keep time with that wretched monosyllable.

Larry, on the other hand, and boy-like, made no effort to appear at ease. He was utterly and thoroughly miserable, torn with the worst kind of anxiety. He tried to read, but no book held his interest. He was not strong enough to go out on the street. There was nothing he could do but sit and brood over the suffering of one who had sacrificed himself for him. And such a needless sacrifice it had been, too! He ought to have known better than to have gone swimming at that place, and above all to have dived off into un-

known waters. He had been warned of the treacherousness of the lake front. Why, oh why, had he done it? He could not blame himself too severely.

Of course Tim had done only what one might have known Tim would do. Larry realized this with a keenness that hurt. He saw the ultimate generosity of his friend's character, that friend whom he had, at times, been moved to criticize for his selfishness. Bah! He, Larry, was the selfish one.

And thus it had gone on, minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day. Recriminations and more recriminations. Unless the suffering and agony were soon over, it seemed to Larry that something would surely snap in his brain.

About eleven o'clock that night the nurse hastily summoned Mrs. Reed, who had consented to take a much needed rest only on the distinct understanding that she was to be called at the first sign of change.

"He's becoming almost violent and is calling all the time for Larry. He seems to think he is

down under the water and that he can't find him. The doctor is here and he says to bring Larry in at once."

Mrs. Reed slipped noiselessly into her son's room. She found him sitting in a chair by the window looking off into the darkness. "Larry," she said in an under-tone, "Tim wants you. Now, dear, you must be brave. We haven't thought it wise for you, in your weakened condition, to see him, but this may be a critical moment. You will find him changed and a little delirious, but just go in with me and stand by his bed-side and speak to him."

"All ready, mother." Larry was instantly on his feet and moving toward Tim's door. Even before he crossed the threshold he heard the cries.

"Larry! Larry! He's down there, I tell you, let me go!" There were more words lost in an inarticulate jumble.

Larry walked quickly over to the bed and, stooping down, took Tim's hand.

"Yes, Tim," he faltered.

Tim did not look at him. "Let me go, I say. Larry! Larry!" He jerked his hand away and started to rise to a sitting posture but was held down by the doctor.

"Oh! why won't you let me go!" he moaned again.

And then the quiet of the room was broken by a queer sound. It resembled somewhat the call of a bird to its mate. It came again and a third time, a soft, low, chirruping whistle.

It was the signal that the boys used to call to each other. Sometimes at night the cheery note would ring out across the street and would be answered from the porch or from inside the house by the one who had reached home first from work. At camp it had more than once sounded over the lake or through the little grove of trees. It was generally recognized as the "Tim and Larry" call and no one else had dared to appropriate it.

For a moment Tim lay still and then puckering up his lips he made a brave effort to answer the summons. Larry bent over him and whistled

again,—softly. Tim looked at him doubtfully for a minute and then—smiled.

“Larry” he breathed in a swift moment of recognition and turned over and fell into a natural sleep.

CHAPTER XVI

THE YEAR BOOK PRIZE

THE big pipe organ rolled forth the last strains of the closing hymn, the benediction was pronounced, and the people hurried out of the church into a glorious summer afternoon. The Vesper services of the Grant Memorial Church were always popular and drew large congregations.

Tim did not often go to church, but something on this occasion had drawn him forth. It may have been partly the boredom of convalescence. As active as he had always been, he had found it extremely difficult to keep still during those long days and weeks when the doctor had counseled rest. His recovery had been swift,—but it had seemed far from that to Tim. The next day he was to go back to the office. Though he was still

not as strong as he had been on those wonderful days in camp preceding the accident, Dr. Leonard saw that further confinement was going to prove too much of an irritation.

"I guess you will be all right," he had remarked that morning, "when you get out with folks again. Only don't do too much at first. Go easy, my boy."

His attendance at church had been unpremeditated. In fact, when Larry and his mother started out he had refused to go, preferring to remain with his book. He had soon tired of that, however, and decided that he would follow his friends.

To Tim the service had been a most impressive one. It was largely musical, though there had been a short address on "Beauty." The vivid contrast which the speaker drew between the things which are ugly and those which are good to look upon was one which Tim felt he would never forget. Most of all, perhaps, his mind lingered on the preacher's references to character, the character that was well-rounded and fair

to behold in the eyes of God, and the character that was soiled and spotted with disease and impurities.

The church was a restful place. Tim had never quite realized how restful it was. Instead of rushing out with the others, when the service was ended, he sank down into one of the side pews underneath the balcony, in the deep shadows where he could hardly be seen. The organist was playing the Postlude. What wonderful tones came from that great instrument. It seemed almost human.

Then the music ceased and soon the church was empty. Still Tim sat on in the grateful shadows. He closed his eyes; he would stay there and rest a little while. He wanted to think.

What was that line that the minister had quoted—something about a thing of beauty? Ah! he had it—"A thing of beauty is a joy forever." Tim had no illusions about his character; he could almost see the spots on it. There was little hope of its ever being a joy to any one! He

wished—oh how he wished!—that he had always been as decent as Larry.

His meditations just then were interrupted by the most beautiful voice he thought he had ever heard—the church soprano softly practicing with the organist the solo which she was to sing that evening.

Tim gripped the seat in front of him. It seemed as though that was his hymn, a message for him. He kept his eyes on the spot from which the sweet voice came, for he could see no singer, until the last note died away and then he bowed his head.

A ray of sunlight, filtering through the stained glass window at his side, fell full on his face as he lifted it from prayer and showed a new faith, a new hope, in his tear-filled eyes.

Meanwhile, a quite different scene was being enacted in Mr. Disbrow's church-study on the floor above. Immediately after the close of the service Peyser had hurried there and, with a preliminary knock, stuck his head through the door.

"Oh, Mr. Disbrow, I thought perhaps I'd find you here. May I see you for a moment?"

"Yes, certainly, come right in. What can I do for you?"

"It's about the Year Book, the short story prize, you know. I—I—dislike to tell you, but I must. The story which was selected for the first prize is a steal."

Mr. Disbrow looked at Peyser sharply. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that it's copied, word for word, from a story by Johnson, with a few changes, of course, in names. I happened to discover it myself."

A look of absolute discouragement came over Mr. Disbrow's face. He sat down and rested his head on his arm, his elbow on the table. "A steal? How could any one of our boys do that?" Then, after a pause, "Have you the sealed envelope with the assumed name on the outside and the real name inside?"

"Yes."

"I suppose there is nothing to do but to open it. Oh, how can things be so cruel!" He closed

his eyes for a moment and then extended his hand. "Let me have it."

Peyser handed him the white envelope on the outside of which was written "The Girl with the Boy's Hat. By X. Y. Z."

Mr. Disbrow regarded it for a moment and then ran his finger underneath the flap. Before he took out the enclosure he said, "I think perhaps you'd better leave this with me. I will see you about it later. Come back in, say twenty minutes."

"Very well, sir." Peyser nodded and left the room. As he went out he saw Tim coming in long strides up the hall toward Mr. Disbrow's door.

"Is Mr. Disbrow there?" Tim asked breathlessly, and without waiting for a reply hurried on, opened the door, and saw the Director of the club sitting at the table, looking blankly at a slip of paper. Disbrow glanced up at him but hardly seemed to realize that he was present, his eyes going back unseeingly to the tiny sheet before him.

"Mr. Disbrow," Tim began, "I have come to tell you something, something which I intended to tell you long ago, before I was sick."

"Yes?" Mr. Disbrow looked up inquiringly.

"It isn't exactly easy and I don't know how to begin . . ." Tim glanced restlessly around the room. "I guess perhaps the only way to do it is just to say it all at once. You know that Year Book contest? Well, the story I sent in I copied. Oh—I'm so sorry—so sorry."

Mr. Disbrow waited a moment. Then: "Why didn't you tell me before? What is your reason for telling me now?"

"Oh, that's just it, that's the worst part of it. I wanted to tell you before. Larry can tell you that."

"Larry!" Mr. Disbrow interrupted. "Does he know?"

"Yes. When we were at camp I told him all about it and he said I must tell you. That was the day we went on our hike and almost got drowned. Things have been so mixed up ever since that I forgot all about it until this after-

noon, in church, when I was thinking of all the rotten things I'd done. It came to me then, in a flash, that I hadn't told you about that story. Oh—it isn't too late, is it, Mr. Disbrow? Larry said it might win the prize. That would be . . . awful! I suppose Larry thinks I have seen you about it before this and cleared it all up. I don't see how I came to forget it."

"No, it isn't too late." Mr. Disbrow was very sober. "The decisions have not been made public."

"Larry said you would understand. He said"—pathetically—"you'd know that I wouldn't do anything like this now, and that you'd—forgive me."

"Tell me about it." Mr. Disbrow spoke more kindly, but he did not smile. How Tim longed to see him smile!

"I don't see as there is anything to tell. I just copied the story, that's all."

"What made you do it? Because you wanted the money?"

"Oh, it may have been that, partly," Tim an-

swered. "It was just natural to me to try to get ahead of the next person,—any way, as long as I could get ahead. I didn't know much in those days about character. That wasn't what the people that I went with thought about. They only wanted to know how they could beat somebody else to it."

"You submitted the story when you first came into the club?"

"Yes, right away, and then I forgot about it except when some of the fellows spoke to me, and even then it didn't seem as if it was of any importance because it didn't occur to me that it might win. When I told Larry, however, he made me see that the only thing I could do and keep any self-respect was to tell you all about it. Can't I clear myself, Mr. Disbrow? Won't you believe that I wouldn't put over anything like that now?"

"Yes," Mr. Disbrow replied.

"Thank you, sir." Tim rose to go.

"Wait just a moment." Mr. Disbrow motioned him back to his seat. "There are others be-

sides you and me concerned in this. Peyser came here just a few minutes ago and told me that he had discovered that the story which had been selected for first prize had been copied. That story was called 'The Boy with the Girl's Hat.' You see you were only just in time."

"Does Peyser know who sent it in?"

"Not yet—but he must."

"He must?"

"Yes. That's what I want you to do,—go to Peyser and apologize to him. He, as editor of the Year Book, is entitled to that." Mr. Disbrow did not add that he had noted an unreasoning animosity between these two boys and that he hoped in this way to bring them together. He would give Peyser a word of advice and caution before Tim saw him; Peyser was due to return any minute now.

"That's a pretty hard dose, Mr. Disbrow."

"That's the penalty for wrong doing in this world. Sometimes we get it sooner than other times, but the reckoning is sure to come and to be severe."

"Of course I shall go," Tim rose. "I'll hunt him up right away; no more delays for me!"

"Good!" This time Mr. Disbrow did smile, and with the warmth of that smile in his heart, Tim started on his unpleasant mission.

CHAPTER XVII

“WHEN YOU GET TO KNOW PEYSER—”

A FEW minutes later Tim ran up the front steps of Peyser's home and rang the bell.

“Is James Peyser in?” he inquired of the maid who answered his summons. He was surprised at the evenness of his tone, for he was shaking with nervousness.

“No,” the maid replied.

Tim hesitated, disliking to postpone the interview.

“Well—a—will he be in soon?”

“If you will wait just a minute I'll ask. His mother is out too, but his grandmother is here and she may know. Won't you come in?”

Tim accepted the invitation and was ushered into a cozy sitting room.

“Just sit down a moment, please.” The maid

departed only to return a moment later with the message that Master James was expected very soon.

"If you don't mind, I'll wait," Tim said. The girl nodded her head in acquiescence and left the room.

Tim glanced around curiously and was surprised to feel about this house those qualities which had so impressed him on his first introduction into the Reed family circle—qualities which spelled "home," and which stood for loving care and thought.

Somehow Tim had never associated Peyser with anything of this sort. He had thought of him as hard and selfish. Why, there was even a picture, on the little mahogany table at Tim's side, of a dear old lady—undoubtedly the grandmother to whom the maid had referred—and Peyser, their heads close together, their cheeks almost touching in a loving caress. This surely was not the Peyser that Tim knew.

Tim's meditations were interrupted by the patter of a child's feet, and a moment later a little

girl, two or three years old, came into the room.

"Who are you?" she asked in soft tones, pushing back with chubby hands the curly hair which persisted in falling over her face.

"I'm Tim," the boy answered, smiling somewhat uneasily.

"Who's Tim?" the child persisted.

"Who is Tim? Well that's a hard question to answer; but first, who are you? I don't know your name."

"Yes, you do," she gave back.

"No, I don't," Tim contradicted. "Come along, tell me—what's your name?"

"Aw—you—you know who I am. I'm *Ma-bel* of course!"

"Mabel-of-course? Well, who's Mabel-of-course?"

But already the child was tired of her play. She made a dart for a corner of the room where she extricated from the shadows a little woolly lamb, mounted on a wooden platform on wheels, which she promptly placed in Tim's lap.

"See!" she cried, "My lamb's all fixit now. It

was broke here and here and here. Brother Jimmy, he says sister's a bad girl to break it so, but he makes it all well again. I like to break 'em just so he can fix 'em," she confessed.

Tim took up the toy and examined the repair work that had been done on it. Peyser—the careful mender of a baby's toys? This again was not Peyser as Tim knew him.

"Don't you break it," Mabel went on. "If you break it, I'll tell my big brother and he'll—" her threat was cut short by—

"Mabel!—Mabel, where are you?" And almost upon the words came a little old lady.

"Here I is, Gramma, in here with this—" she took an appraising view of the stranger and concluded, "with this boy."

Tim rose. "I'm waiting for James," he explained. "The maid said he would be here soon."

"Yes, I am sure he will, he's late now."

"Oh, Gramma, you got all dressed up in your bestest dress," Mabel exclaimed. "Oooh—I just love my Gramma."

Tim did not wonder at that. Dressed in some

soft gray material, a touch of white at her throat and an old-fashioned cameo at her breast, she seemed almost to have stepped out of a dream of lovely things.

"Hush—hush!" the grandmother expostulated, flushing, "you should not say such things before company."

The opening of the outside door and a hearty "Hello" announced James' arrival. In an instant he was in the room and had his sister in his arms and was tossing her in the air.

"Well, Toodles," he cried, "how goes it?"

"You just stop calling me Toodles," the child protested. "My name's Ma-bel!"

"All right, Toodles, I'll stop." He set her down firmly on the floor and turned and placed a vigorous and resounding kiss squarely on his grandmother's forehead—to the obvious pleasure of that little woman.

"There are your peppermints," he said, dropping in her hand a box of candy. "I almost forgot them."

Then he caught sight of Tim at the other end

of the room and his whole manner changed.

"Oh! I didn't know any one was here."

"Yes," his grandmother put in, "your friend has been waiting for you for some time. Come, Toodles."

"My name isn't Toodles," the child again sang out as her grandmother bundled her out of the room.

For a fraction of a minute Tim and Peyser looked at each other without speaking. Then Tim began:

"Peyser, I've come to apologize to you as editor of the Year Book. The story which I sent in to the contest called 'The Boy with the Girl's Hat' was copied. I'm sorry, that's all I've got to say and I won't keep you any longer."

He started for the door.

Peyser had been taken by surprise, not at what Tim had said, for Mr. Disbrow had told him what was forthcoming, but at the way he had said it. He had expected excuses and some of Tim's usual glib talk. The absolute matter-of-fact manner in which he had stated the case,

confused him for a moment, but before Tim had reached the door he had recovered his self-possession.

"Just a minute!"—blocking Tim's egress. "Let me get this thing straight. You copied it? What do you mean?" There was a trace of the arrogance in his voice that Tim had always associated with Peyser.

"I should think that was plain enough. It was a story in a book and I copied it."

"Gee, you certainly always had your nerve right with you. I shouldn't have thought you'd have dared. . . ."

"I don't care to discuss it with you. Hang it all, Peyser, can't you be half-way human, just for once, and see that this thing isn't pleasant for me, that I'm ashamed of my part in it? What's the use of saying more?"

"No use, I suppose, only—, well—, why don't you try to explain the affair—tell why you did it?" Peyser floundered around uncertainly.

"I don't see that it's any of your business," Tim flared back.

Peyser reddened. "Maybe it isn't, but—well, you know you could usually explain away anything—and I expected you'd try the same game here."

"You knew about it, then? Mr. Disbrow told you?"

"Yes," Peyser shifted uneasily from one foot to the other.

"I'd have explained it, if I could, but there wasn't any explanation this time. It was a cheat and you can't explain away a cheat."

"You haven't always felt that way." Peyser regretted the words the minute he had spoken them. He had been thinking of what Mr. Disbrow had said about the change that had come over Tim,—but it was the apparent sarcasm of the remark that struck Tim.

"I don't know as I'm called upon to tell you my whole moral history," he flung out.

Peyser bit his lip. Then—"No, you aren't. I didn't mean that quite the way you took it. I was thinking of—"

"Of the minstrel tickets, I suppose," Tim completed his sentence.

"Perhaps," Peyser admitted.

There was an uncomfortable silence broken by Tim with: "Well, I told Mr. Disbrow all—"

"I don't want to hear about it," Peyser interrupted quickly—and again the silence. Then Peyser went on:

"Scarsboro—we never hit it off right from the very start, did we?"

"We certainly did not!" This emphatically.

"Made a bad get-a-way. Disbrow said it was like a race; if you made a bad start it was all off, most likely. I made the first break and I guess it's up to me to suggest that we start all over again."

"It's about fifty-fifty, I think! Honors are pretty near even," Tim put in.

"Let's forget it all"—Peyser held out his hand doubtfully. "I can be a little more decent than I have been to you—and I'll try if you'll let me?"

"I haven't been a saint myself, so far as you were concerned—or anybody else for that matter," Tim admitted, "so I guess we can call the slate clean, if you like." He looked hesitatingly at the outstretched hand and then his own went out, somewhat awkwardly, and met and gripped it.

"Now I really must be going. It's late and Mother Reed will be wondering—" Tim moved toward the door, which Peyser opened and the two boys stepped out into the dusk of the late afternoon.

"Great weather," Peyser observed.

"Yes," Tim agreed. "Well," running down the steps of the porch—"so-long."

"So-long," Peyser called back. Then, "Oh, by the way. I'm going to have a little party next week Friday, just a few fellows, games and things, and 'eats.' I'd like you to come." It was his final peace offering.

"Thanks, awfully"—seeing the invitation for what it was and accepting it—"I'll be there."

CHAPTER XVIII

TIM HEARS THE CALL—AND ANSWERS

THE steam calliope was playing as only a steam calliope can, exuberantly, defiantly. It was noon-time and its wild notes, announcing the presence of a recruiting officer of the United States Navy, was bringing together some of the men and boys pouring from the offices and stores. In an open auto-bus, drawn up at the side of the street and from which floated the Stars and Stripes, stood two or three young men, measuring with professional eyes the crowd that surged around them.

The playing stopped. Instantly a man in the uniform of a Chief Petty Officer—a C. P. O., Tim had learned all such were popularly called—jumped up on to the seat of the bus and began a plea for volunteers.

From the start it seemed to Tim, who was on the outskirts of the crowd, that the man was talking right at him. For several noons, now, Tim had been listening to the speeches made by army and navy men on this particular corner of the square, and it may have been the fear that the speaker recognized him as a regular attendant that made Tim see something personal in his address.

He had been thinking a great deal of late about the war and the part that youth was playing in it. He had seen many of his associates in the office leave for camp. At first he had noted their going with indifference, not untouched perhaps with wonder at the eagerness with which they went. He had bid good-by to several intimate friends whose departure had served to bring the war closer to him. He had read their letters from camp with increasing interest. He had received one long, rambling account from a blue-jacket who was seeing service on a transport and had made several wonderful trips to a French port and who wrote of foreign scenes

with an intimacy that seemed almost beyond belief. John Burton, who used to keep the advertising files, now on the high seas or shopping in queer little French by-ways—it was past understanding! That letter Tim kept in his inside pocket and referred to it many times.

And so while Tim did not say much about it, the war was coming to be an affair of his very own. Indifference, mild interest, had given way, little by little, to a deeper feeling, until now he was fired by a passion to do something, to get into the thing, to contribute his part in the great fight. Besides, there was—and he admitted it to himself and would have admitted it no less frankly to others—that inevitable appeal to youth, of adventure, of the changing scene and daring deeds—all of which war typified.

“Do you fellows out there know what a Democracy is?”

The question, though put generally to the one hundred or more people around the calliope, seemed to come straight from the C. P. O.’s lips to Tim. It brought him back sharply to the pres-

ent moment, to the present scene. He had been thinking of white capped waves, and of gray sea dogs, of aëroplanes and of submarines. . . .

"I say!" the speaker continued, emphatically hitting one clenched hand into the palm of the other, "I say, this is a war for Democracy and do you know what a Democracy is? Let me tell you. It's a country where the people have a voice in its affairs, where they elect those who shall govern them and frame the laws under which they are governed. In a Democracy every individual counts, every individual works out his own destiny!

"What's the other thing, the opposite of a Democracy? An Autocracy! That's what we're fighting. A state where everything is organized and directed by a few, a state where you—and you—and you—wouldn't count as much as a fly.

"Germany wants to make the entire world an Autocracy, with the Kaiser as the chief Autocrat. Are we going to let her?

"A democracy benefits the people,—it's the peo-

ple's friend—and when it is in danger and is threatened by a powerful enemy—the people should rush to its aid. A Democracy doesn't mean that you take all and give nothing. It stands firmly on the principle that you give as well as receive.

"Who's going to make a little return for all that this country has done for him and for millions of others? Who's going to help the United States show the Kaiser that we'll have none of his royal rules and that Yankee ways are good enough for us? Now then, who?

"Come on, Pete, give us a little music and all those who want to help Uncle Sam right now, and who want to be in on his final glory, just climb up on this old bus. If you can't all get in here we'll hire another one."

He stepped down from the seat and the calliope in martial tones carried on his plea.

Tim was one of the first to edge his way to the bus.

"I'm ready," he announced, stepping up on to the running board.

"One recruit for Uncle Sam's navy," shouted the officer who had been speaking. Then, catching sight of the boy's youthfulness, he asked doubtfully, "But, my lad, how old are you?"

"Just seventeen," Tim answered.

The C. P. O. shook his head.

"Sorry, too young."

"But I thought," Tim's voice quavered, "you could enlist when you were seventeen if you had your parents' consent. Well, I haven't got any parents and only a sort of half-guardian—a step-sister. Here's a letter from her saying she's willing." Tim took an envelope from his pocket and handed it to the C. P. O.

The officer took the missive and read it.

"Um-m," he said; "this does make a difference. Get in, get in," good-naturedly. "We'll see what can be done."

It had all happened so quickly that Tim could hardly realize it,—the matter over which he had been deliberating for many days decided in the twinkling of an eye! But he was perfectly happy and satisfied in his choice. He stood in the bus

and watched others hesitating, considering, and oftentimes turning away. It seemed as though they would never get enough!

"Come on in!" he cried, jumping to his feet as he saw a particularly likely candidate meandering off, "come on in, the water's fine! What's the use of red ink and blue ink and black ink and ledgers and vouchers and dry-as-dust business, when there are wireless and aëroplanes and submarines, rough weather and ship-wrecks and—"

He caught sight of the C. P. O. and sank down in confusion, out of sight. But the call of youth to youth had been heard; it was answered by three or four young men who had apparently been just on the border and had only needed the right word to pull them across.

"Gosh, Buddy," the C. P. O. clapped Tim on the back, "I think they'd better give you my job."

They started off jubilantly, the bus now carrying to capacity, a score of youths eager to respond to the summons from over the seas.

In a few minutes they drew up before a big, forbidding-looking building over which the

"Stars and Stripes" were flying and in front of which stood two or three men in uniform, while several conspicuously-placed posters glowingly set forth the advantages to be derived from service in the U. S. Navy.

The bus load of men and boys was soon swallowed up in the ceaseless whirl of well ordered activity that went on inside. Ushered up a flight of stairs they found themselves in a large bare room. Here their names were listed and a few questions asked. Then came the physical tests. Tim would never forget that scene; the unhurried doctors, the anxious applicants—the judicial calm on the one hand, the nervous suspense on the other!

For one dark moment Tim thought he was going to be rejected.

"A little underweight . . . lungs a little weak . . . otherwise pretty fair." The doctor ran a professional eye over Tim's figure and consulted a card on which various entries had been made.

"Oh, but I've been sick recently," Tim interjected hurriedly. "I'm all right usually. You

ought to see me—I'm—why, I'm almost fat!"

"Sick? What was the matter?"

"Had pneumonia."

"Humph—that doesn't help much. How'd that happen?"

"Oh, I caught it,—keeping on wet clothes."

"Wet clothes? I don't understand—"

Little by little the doctor got the story of the rescue out of the lad.

"Humph," he grunted—for what seemed to Tim the hundredth time,—when he had all the details, "I guess you'll do!"

Tim's enlistment was the occasion of little surprise to the Reeds, who had known that he had secured Annie's written permission and had been expecting the news daily.

"I am sorry and I'm glad," Mrs. Reed confessed, holding the boy's hand tight in her own. "I am sorry for myself and glad for you, glad that you wanted to do it."

Tim moved uneasily. "Oh, I think it'll be bully."

"When do you go, old man?" Larry inquired.

"I don't know, but probably in a few days," Tim answered. "I'm waiting instructions now."

"What's a sailor do, Mother?" Ruth had been an interested listener to the conversation.

"He mans the warships, dear, and protects our coasts and helps to make the seas safe."

"Oh! and—and—will you have a uniform, Tim?" Ruth persisted.

"Yes."

"And leggins, and a blue and white collar and a hat with the name of your boat on it? Oh, won't that be nice!"

"You're right, girly, it will," Tim agreed.

"And say, will you give me a button from your uniform to—to—remember you by?" Ruth looked up at Tim shyly.

"Sailor's uniforms," Tim laughed, "don't have nice bright buttons, but I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll give you a lock of my hair tied up with a pink ribbon. Will that do?"

"Oh, now you're teasing. I want a button."

"Very well, button it shall be, if it's only a

plain white one, and when I come back I'll bring you a parrot and . . . and . . ."

"And we'll play 'Button, button, who's got the button,'" Mrs. Reed joined in, to break the spell.

"Come, now, supper's ready."

CHAPTER XIX

THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD

THE next few days, events crowded upon Tim with a bewildering and exhilarating swiftness. He had thought that the various preliminaries attending his actual induction into service would consume quite a bit of time—and delay was something which Tim never enjoyed. He was distinctly gratified, then, when it became evident, less than a week after he had offered his services to the Navy, that no obstacle was to be encountered and that he would be in uniform almost before he knew it.

Only ten days in all had elapsed when the summons came to report for duty. The Reeds made the final breakfast together a gala affair and insisted upon addressing Tim as “Admiral”—to his intense discomfiture.

"Well, Admiral," Larry asked between munches of toast, "when do you suppose we'll see you again? When you lead your fleet up the Hudson after your return from victory abroad? Or will we have a glimpse of you before you go?"

"You can search me," Tim replied. "I don't know what's going to be done to me this morning. That's the beauty of the navy—and of the army too. You don't have to worry about what you've got to do, you just have to do what you are told. That's easy, isn't it?"

"Oh, surely they'll let you come back before you go away," Mrs. Reed protested. "They always do. Why, you simply can't go away without our seeing you first."

"No," Ruth mildly added. "Besides, I want to get a picture of you with my kodak."

"Take it now," Tim challenged.

"But I want you in your uniform," Ruth confessed.

"Ah! I thought so. Well, I'll see that I get a special pass to have my photograph taken. The

war can wait. I'll tell 'em the finest little photographer in the world wants me to pose. Will that do?"

He rose abruptly from the table and stepped briskly toward the door of the room. "Well, good-by, till the next time," he called out, and seizing his hat and suitcase, ran lightly down the hall and out-doors almost before the Reeds realized that he had gone.

Tim disliked "good-bys." The present separation meant more to him than perhaps even the Reeds realized. He felt that he simply could not go through with the conventional farewell.

"A beastly way to leave them," he muttered to himself, as he hurried up the street. "Wonder what Mrs. Reed will think now?"

But Mrs. Reed understood. The moisture in the boy's eyes had not gone unnoticed.

"He'll come back," she said, "I know it."

Her intuition proved correct—and sooner than she expected. The next day but one, as she was preparing supper, she heard the old familiar call

of Larry and Tim—long and shrill and piercing and confident. A lump came into her throat and she swallowed hard. Larry had whistled in that way so often as he hit the home stretch that it had become automatic. He must have forgotten that now there was no one to answer him.

But it was not Larry's voice that rang out a moment later:

"Well, I say, isn't there anybody home?"

Mrs. Reed dropped her potato-masher and rushed toward the front of the house. "Timothy, . . . why . . . you?"

"Yes, I, Mother Reed. Just look at me."

But before she looked Mrs. Reed folded the boy to her in an embrace such as Tim had never known and the memory of which was to go with him to far distant scenes.

Mrs. Reed released him and held him off at arms' length. "I knew you'd come, I knew you'd come! But I didn't dare look for you so soon."

"Well, you see, I have really come now to say good-by," Tim laughed unsteadily. "I'm being

sent away and they have given me a twenty-four hour furlough before I go and then I'm gone for good."

"Not for good, Tim, you are coming back again. I know that just as certainly as I knew you were coming this time. That's the sure knowledge I shall always keep with me—and please God, it won't be long before you're back to stay."

She looked away suddenly and made a dash for the kitchen.

"Oh! my steak! It must be burned to a crisp," she cried over her shoulder; but before she gave attention to the meat she furtively wiped her eyes on her apron. Then: "I think the butcher must have known you were going to be with us for supper. He sent at least half a pound more than he should have."

A few moments later Larry came in, and after a startled exclamation, seized Tim's hand in a mighty grip. That was his only greeting.

"Where is he—where is he—where is he?" Ruth came rushing into the room like a cyclone.

"Martin Kelly said he was here. He saw him coming up the street." But when she saw Tim looking so strange and so straight and trim in his uniform, she fell back abashed. "Why, good-evening, Tim," she said formally.

"Hello, Sis!" Tim replied. "What's the matter? Don't you like me in my new togs?"

"Martin Kelly," Ruth began, regaining her composure, "said you looked just fine, and . . . I agree with . . . Martin Kelly," she added naïvely.

"But you haven't told us where you have been," Mrs. Reed said a little later as they sat down at the table, "or what you have done."

"I haven't done anything exciting as yet, or been many miles away. First of all, I had to get my uniform and all that goes with it. Then, after some little delay, I got my orders to report at the Farragut Training Station where I stayed over-night. To-day they assigned me to the Training Ship *Perry*. I have to report there to-morrow. That's the whole thing in a nutshell. The next time I see you, maybe I'll have some-

thing really worth while to tell, something that will make Ruth over there wildly excited." He saluted her with mock dignity and then turned abruptly to Larry.

"Is the Club open to-night? You know, I have a notion I'd like to go down there once more and see the bunch."

"Good stunt, you will find many of them there too; there is a billiard tournament on. Maybe I'll drop in on you after a while. Just at present I have got to see Dr. Leonard about our Thrift Stamp report. Congratulate us, old man, we sold five hundred dollars' worth last week alone. I guess that's booming things, isn't it?"

The clubroom was well filled with boys when Tim opened the door an hour later and walked in. Most of them were following with keen interest the semi-finals of the most exciting tournament the club had ever held. They were standing as near the table as the players would allow, some on the floor, others on chairs which they had brought up to get a better view.

There were cheers and groans as the favorites of the contest made either good or bad plays.

"Go to it, Micky, he's only got you by six points," from one side.

"Keep it up, keep it up, Bill, you've got him easy," from the other.

Attention was so undivided that Tim's entrance was not noticed. He looked on at the game for a moment and then took a stroll around the room. In a far corner there was a small billiard table used by the younger members of the Club and at this a boy whom Tim did not know was playing a solitary game. Tim watched him, amused at the crude way in which he handled the cue and at his vain efforts to put the ball into the pocket. The lad caught sight of the smile on Tim's lips:

"Aw, wot's the matter wit' you. I s'pose you could always play de game."

"Indeed I couldn't. I used to do a lot worse than you are doing. But don't you want me to show you how to hold the stick?"

Without waiting for a reply, Tim took the cue

and gave the boy a few points as to its use. He was an apt pupil and made much better work of it after a few trials under Tim's direction.

"Are you a member of this Club?" Tim inquired.

"Naw," disdainfully. "Wot would I be doin' in a club like dis?"

"Why not? Why shouldn't you belong to a club like this? We'd like to have you."

"Wot, *me*? I ain't like dese guys; I sell papers."

"What of that? You want to play billiards, don't you? And have a good time and get, oh—lots and lots of things."

"Aw—do you get stuff in dis club?"

"You sure do," Tim answered soberly, "more than you'll ever realize for years and years."

"What does it cost?"

"It doesn't cost much, only a few cents a month."

"And you get a lot for a few cents? Well, I might try it . . . I'm good for anything once't."

"Good. Now you stay here and I'll find the

President and we'll fix it all up." He went away but was soon back with Peyser.

"This is our new President, just elected; his name is Peyser, good chap,—and your name?"

"Me name's Bud Roberts."

Tim turned to Peyser. "Mr. Peyser, allow me to present Mr. Bud Roberts, a candidate for membership in the Pettibone Boys' Club."

Instantly Peyser's hand, clean and manicured, reached out and took a very dirty and work-roughened hand.

"Glad to have you join, Bud," Peyser said cordially, while Tim marveled.

"I sure had Peyser all dead wrong," he thought to himself, "or else he too has changed. I wonder if the club has been taking effect on him too?"

With a grand shout the billiard contest came to a close and Tim was soon discovered. Congratulations and best wishes were heaped upon him in such numbers and with such enthusiasm that he was fairly dazed.

"I do appreciate it all. It means more than

you fellows realize," he said in response to an insistent and general demand for a speech. "It means everything, to know that you have a place in a club like this. I just hope that when I come back you will all be here, and if you are, we'll get up a cracking good minstrel show."

"To raise money to buy War Savings Stamps with?" somebody put in facetiously.

"No," emphatically. "There won't be any war when I come back, but we'll find something to do with the money, never you fear."

"Please, can I sell you a stamp now," the same joker continued, and in the laugh that followed Tim made his escape to Mr. Disbrow's study.

Tim and Mr. Disbrow talked quietly for an hour or more, Tim hopefully and bravely looking into the future, Mr. Disbrow offering counsel, taking, as he put it, a father's place.

"I want to thank you for all you have done, Mr. Disbrow," Tim said, as he rose to go. "I haven't realized it. I think I'm just beginning to now, and I shan't forget."

"We shall all follow you, in our thoughts.

We shall be expecting the best that is in you.” Mr. Disbrow laid his hand on the lad’s shoulder and looked searchingly into his face. There was a silent moment and then:

“I will give it,” Tim promised—and he spoke as one who had made a covenant with his God.

As he was passing out of the room he stopped.

“Oh, by the way, Mr. Disbrow, there is a new boy in the club. His name is Buddy Roberts. I wish you would sort of look out for him the way you used to for me.”

“I am glad you told me. I will, of course.”

“Thank you. I have a special reason—it’s because . . . because he makes me think of myself a little . . . don’t you know?” Tim ended feebly and hurried away.

Several months pass. Newton City is in gala dress. Flags float from nearly every window; the streets are thronged with crowds who have come to show honor to the boys in service. The occasion is the grand climax of the city’s War Savings Stamp Drive—but the real purpose of

the celebration is almost lost sight of in the eagerness to see and to applaud the men in khaki and those in blue who make up the parade. The crowd is sober as the long lines march by. An occasional cheer greets some local celebrity or a particularly effective bit of tactics; but for the most part those on the sidewalks or hanging from windows of buildings are too busy scanning the faces of the paraders even to give voice to the pride they feel.

Close by the curb a woman and a young girl stand, holding their places firmly while the crowd surges around them; a few feet in back of them, two men, one approaching the middle years, the other just entering manhood.

"Oh, there they come, there they come!" The little girl points excitedly up the avenue at the approaching "blues." "Here are the sailors, Mother. Oh, do you suppose we'll see him?"

"We don't even know he's going to march, dear," her mother answers. "There's only a chance, a bare chance . . ." Nevertheless her

face flushes and her eyes sparkle as she looks carefully at row after row of men.

"I see him, I see him—quick—the last one over—the third line down—Larry, Mr. Disbrow—there's Tim." The girl jumps up and down in her excitement.

"O—O—O—Tim," she calls. "Tim, Tim!"

But with eyes straight ahead the lad in blue marches by. If he hears, as he must, he makes no sign.

The woman's hand clutches the daughter's arm, but no word comes to her lips. Just behind her the two men are silent, though their eyes follow the marching figure until it merges into the mass of blue in the far distance.

"There's a chap"—it is the older man who speaks and his voice is husky—"who is finding that the greatest thing in the world is service. He'll be happy—for he has learned the way."

THE following pages contain advertisements of Macmillan books for boys and girls.

A CHILDREN'S HOMER

The Children's Homer:

The Adventures of Odysseus and the Tale of Troy

BY PADRAIC COLUM

With illustrations by WILLY POGANY

Cloth, 12mo. \$2.00

To be published in October

This is the first attempt to combine the story of the Odyssey and the Iliad. As is fitting in a Homer intended for young people the book opens with the youth Telemachus who is moved to go in search for his father. He hears from the minstrel of his house and afterwards from Menelaus, Helen and Nestor, the stories of Achilles, Hector and Odysseus. In this way the Iliad is presented. Afterwards the narrative is taken up with the adventures of Odysseus on his way back to his own land and the whole enchanting work is retold. Padraic Colum has made the new redaction of Homer for young people. He tells the great story in a way that is at once intimate and spirited. *The Adventures of Odysseus and the Tale of Troy* is the greatest of children's books. It has been illustrated by Willy Pogany.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
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NEW BOOKS FOR BOYS

The Boy's Own Book of Great Inventions

By F. L. DARROW

With many illustrations.

Every boy — and many a girl, too — likes to make things, and it is out of this certain interest which youth has in invention that this book has grown. Its appeal is primarily to the inventive faculty latent in every youngster. Not only does Mr. Darrow describe the great inventions of man, but he applies the principles underlying them to simple apparatus which the boy can construct for himself. The *aéroplane*, the balloon, the various kinds of engines, the telephone, the telegraph, the submarine, the telescope — all these and many more come in for consideration, followed in each case with simple experiments which the reader can make for himself, and in many cases with explicit directions for the construction of an adaptation of the machine or instrument.

Stephen's Last Chance

By MARGARET ASHMUN

Illustrated, \$1.50

Here's a little boy, alone and friendless, in Last Chance Gulch. His aunt, who was his only relative, has just died. The future looks pretty dark to him — and that is where the story begins.

What happens to Stephen after Emery and Sara Clark take him back to their ranch out in the wildest part of Montana, how he rides the bucking "Scratch Gravel," helps to capture the bank robbers, and how he saves Emery Clark's life by doing a very brave (and hard) thing, and best of all, how he takes his "last chance," is told in the most interesting and exciting way.

Boys will like this book immensely because it is full of adventure and something happens on every page. What happens? Well — that's telling!

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Publishers 64-66 Fifth Avenue New York

NEW BOOKS FOR BOYS

That Year at Lincoln High

By JOSEPH GOLLOMB

With illustrations by E. C. CASWELL

This is a rousing story of public school life in a big city, a story full of incidents ranging from hotly contested athletic meets—baseball and basketball games—to mysterious secret society initiations.

The principal character is, perhaps, one J. Henley Smollet, whose well-to-do father decrees that he shall go to the nearby public school instead of to the aristocratic private institution on which the boy's heart had been set. There is a good reason for the senior Smollet's action, as the story shows. Hardly less appealing as a character is Isadore Smollensky, of the East Side, whose first encounter with J. Henley is of a pugilistic nature, but who ultimately becomes his warm friend.

Not only is the story vivid and exciting, but it gives, as well, a mighty good idea of the democratizing process going on in our public schools of to-day.

The Pirate of Jasper Peak

By ADAIR ALDON

Author of "The Island of Appledore"

Illustrated.

This is the story of a boy, Hugh Arnold, who, in the first autumn of the present war, finds himself cast upon his own resources in one of the small settlements of the Northwest, his only two friends having gone on a hunting trip into the forest and failed to return. He is given to understand that the only hope of finding them lies in him. So he sets himself to the task in spite of many obstacles—the greatest of them being the open enmity of the much-feared pirate of Jasper Peak. This man is a half-breed Indian, who is trying by squatters' right and force of arm to hold for his own a large unpeopled district, which Hugh's Swedish friend, Oscar Danski, is attempting to open up for settlement and to make available for wheat growing. Hugh and the dog Nicholas manage to find the two lost brothers, and with the help of the Indian woman, Laughing Mary, he succeeds in accomplishing his ends and breaking the power of the pirate.

The book is one which any boy will thoroughly enjoy.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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NEW BOOKS FOR GIRLS

ANOTHER "GIRL PATRIOT" STORY

Girls of '64

BY EMILIE BENSON KNIPE AND ALDEN A. KNIPE

Authors of "A Maid of '76," "Polly Trotter, Patriot," etc.

Illustrated.

Dorothea Drummond, a young Scotch girl on a visit to relations in the South during the Civil War, learns that in the household there is a member of the "Red String," a mysterious society, pledged to work against the Confederacy and to help escaping prisoners. Who is it? Beautiful April May, a rebel through and through, who has parted from her lover because he did not volunteer? Quaint Miss Imogene, with her memories of a favorite suitor from the North? Mrs. May, an avowed submissionist? Val Tracy, a care-free Irishman fighting for the love of a good fight? Or is it one of the servants, daring much when freedom is near?

Mr. and Mrs. Knipe tell a story of tangled fortune in "Girls of '64" that a girl of 18 (or 19) will hardly put down before its happy ending is reached.

OTHER BOOKS FROM THE "GIRL PATRIOT" SERIES

A Maid of '76

It is full of action and holds the interest from the first page; it gives a much more vivid picture of colonial times than a child could get from half a dozen histories.

Illustrated. \$1.35

Polly Trotter, Patriot

"The books which Dr. and Mrs. Knipe have written are more than worthy of praise, for they represent the best type of juvenile fiction."—*Boston Herald.*

Illustrated. \$1.35

A Maid of Old Manhattan

With rare ability the authors have woven their careful historical knowledge about an exciting tale of Peter Stuyvesant's time. It will inspire the reader with the same sympathy for those early patriots as the other books in this splendid series.

Illustrated. \$1.35

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NEW BOOKS FOR GIRLS

Isabel Carleton's Friends

By MARGARET ASHMUN

Author of "Isabel Carleton's Year," etc.

Illustrated. \$1.35

The girls who have read and enjoyed the preceding Isabel Carleton stories will be delighted to know that in this new volume, Isabel's life grows even more interesting, as she goes on through the university. What happens in Jefferson, how the war is brought home to Isabel and the story of two of her friends in particular makes an absorbing narrative.

Isabel Carleton has always been a lovable, straightforward, human girl, and all of these qualities are heightened in the new chronicle.

ANOTHER ELIZABETH BESS STORY

The Loyalty of Elizabeth Bess

By E. C. SCOTT

Author of "Elizabeth Bess"

Illustrated. \$1.35

This book tells more of the delightful little girl who was the central figure in a story published last year which has met with the favor of thousands of young people.

Elizabeth's active interest in her "family" leads her to the doing of unheard of things in their behalf. These experiences and adventures, of which not the least appealing is that growing out of her secret alliance with a fairy king who was to turn stones into gold when his wand, which unfortunately was mislaid, should be recovered, comprise a volume which is different from the average child story.

It is full of whimsical humor and of the sort of entertainment which girls in their teens—and younger and older perhaps—find most satisfying.

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